kakashi's guide on how to survive unrequited love
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kakashi’s guide on how to survive unrequited love

by RK7200

Summary

Kakashi's life was going pretty okay. Both his teammates are alive (even if one is half plant matter- Obito will never live that down) and they are sort of, kind of, a team now.

Then he started coughing up flowers.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

teammate returns from the dead? proceed with caution

Kakashi was a jounin, Rin was a chuunin, Minato was in Iwa and Obito was dead.

Rin had looked at him with desperation in her eyes. As the rain fell and Kiri came for them. Lightning crackled in his hands.

Kakashi was a jounin, Rin was a jinchuuriki, Minato was in Iwa and Obito was dead.

Rin was sure to join Obito. He knew what she wanted. He knew that she didn't want to risk the chance of letting a tailed beast rage carnage in Konoha. He knew that she knew that she had no chance of holding the beast back before it would take over her entirely. He knew that she knew that she would have to die.

Kakashi was a jounin and soon to be a teammate killer. He was sure his father was rolling in his grave and Obito was going to murder him the moment Kakashi died.

Focus, focus, he reminded himself. Lightning crackled as he put another Kiri shinobi down. He knew he couldn't keep this up for long enough for Minato-sensei to get back to them. And he knew Rin knew, too.

Then-

Then Obito- *who was dead- dead and gone because of Kakashi-* appeared.

And then-

Kakashi was a jounin, Rin was still a jinchuurki, Minato was *here* and Obito was alive.

Life passed in a flurry of activity after that. Kakashi watched from the sidelines as Obito went from hospital to T&I to the Hokage chamber then back to the hospital again. Besieged with questions only to have no real answers for them. It kicked the rest of the village into a swirl of hushed words and rumors. With Uchiha Madara at the epicenter of it all.

Kakashi found that he didn't quite care for Uchiha Madara. Though he should've and he would've, once upon a time. Instead, he finds himself a regular at Obito's bedside when he was allowed to visit. Seeing Obito's eyes crinkle up in a grin whenever he saw him or any of their team and Kushina. One side of his face stiff from unfamiliarity, but Kakashi didn't comment.

"You're here again, huh." Obito fixed him with a playful stare. "Must've had nothing else to do."

Kakashi shrugged. Finding himself pinned under Obito's gaze. Placing a fruits basket on the side. As well as get well cards from the rest of the team. Who has not yet ceased to make cards every time they visit Obito.

Obito moved to grab the cards at the frighteningly fast speed. Making Kakashi worry for a moment about Obito's plant arm falling off. He said as such, and Obito made a face.

"My arm isn't." Obito waved his arm around rapidly as though to prove a point. "It isn't *fragile.*" There was a petulant edge to his lips then. Making it clear to Kakashi that Obito was going to fight tooth and nail for his right to move his arm at speeds that would make Minato ashamed.

Kakashi didn't say anything. They all knew that Obito had not taken well to the prodding and poking at his new limbs. Finding it an affront to humanity that he wasn't allowed back into duty before completing all of his physical therapy. It irked Obito to be held down to a hospital bed between his visits to interrogators and council members. Kakashi, even for all his social misgivings, could observe that much without his team or Kushina telling him.

"It's not," Kakashi eventually said. Breaking the silence.

Obito squinted at him. Looking to discern whether Kakashi was telling him a pretty lie. He turned away eventually. Just as Kakashi was beginning to falter under the intense scrutiny.

"I'll beat you after this," Obito said. Apparently satisfied with whatever he saw in Kakashi's expression. "Just you wait, Bakashi."

Kakashi couldn't help the small smile. Not that Obito could see it. With him being absorbed over Rin's get-well card. Doodled with happy smiles and flowers.

“You can try.” Kakashi takes out a kunai to peel the apples for Obito. Obito making a sound of protest.

“Hey- hey, who knows where your kunai has been.” Obito makes a motion to swipe the kunai away from Kakashi. An idiotic idea since if Kakashi had even moved during that attempt, Obito would’ve gotten some slashes. “I’ve seen that thing in the dirt too many times for you to peel me an apple with that.”

“My apologies, your highness,” Kakashi said with utter disdain. Finding that the vitriol that would’ve once come with that statement no longer appeared.

Obito just rolled his eyes. “At least Rin or sensei know how to bring a fruit knife.”

“A knife is a knife.” Kakashi took out another kunai to show Obito the sharp edges. “These are new, too. So I guess you won’t die to diseases.”

Obito makes an exaggerated movement between frustration and indignation. By waving his arms around, again. Ranting something or another about Kakashi and the values of hygienic eating. Then later ranting at Kakashi for peeling the apple too much, shoving the peeled apple in his face and saying something about how he could see the core and god, Kakashi, were you here to spite me.

Kakashi replied with a no and Obito didn’t look like he believes him.

And if during that entire exchange, perhaps Kakashi lips had formed a small smile. Well, that was entirely his business.

It was still hard, after Obito recovered. The questions went away, and so did the visits to T&I. But suddenly team 7 was a lot more volatile than it was previous. With Obito on edge from his near death from boulders, Rin tense from the tailed beast within her, and Kakashi’s mild trauma from nearly losing both teammates. Minato wasn’t doing any better, either. Developing overprotectiveness issues that stretched the entirety of Konoha and then some.

For all that team 7 fought together, they hadn’t really meshed together as a team before everything went to hell and then back. Leaving them an utter mess after. With too many tense tempers and mean spirited words and suddenly team 7 was in a civil war in a heartbeat with everyone trying to commit murder. Obito because

Kakashi said something about how his form was terrible, and Rin because Kakashi did something that injured Obito's plant matter arm despite her warning them to go easy on each other (Kakashi would like to say that he had a bleeding nose from Obito's supposedly healing arm, but he admits using a fire jutsu on Obito's arm wasn't a good idea).

Team 7's volatility maybe, probably, was mainly due to Kakashi.

Kakashi knew that, though, and he was trying. It was frustrating, and hard, and difficult and so many other adjectives that he could use. Most importantly, it was unfamiliar to Kakashi. It didn't come naturally to him. Kakashi's hands were more used to stabbing a man than they were writing get well letters.

All that was to say: Kakashi fumbled with teamwork. It went spectacularly awful the first time he tried to actively team bond. Ending in another all out brawl between Obito and Kakashi while Rin had gone to fetch Minato and medical supplies.

Kakashi never picked social etiquette, apparently, and the shinobi rule book never taught him that either. So he had to trial and error it. Resulting in much too many errors on their team. Too many advices given that were blunter than polite, mission task assignments that was constantly at war with Kakashi's priority to be a good team leader and his desire to protect his teammates, and his meaner moods becoming more frequent as emotions ran high.

Minato, Rin and Obito stuck it out despite it all. Minato with his guidance, pushing Kakashi towards leadership roles in missions that Kakashi wasn't sure he qualify for after, well, Kanabi. But Minato was patient, and he was kind, and he was so many things more Kakashi never bothered to learn before Kanabi. Rin with her gentle approach. Chiding him a few times after she learned that he wanted to hear his teammates say something, anything for feedback. She was not as blunt as Minato, but he learned from her words all the same. Obito with less grace but no less passion for trying to literally beat friendship into Kakashi one punch at a time. With much more complaining and whining than all of Kakashi's dog combined.

All in all. Team 7 was doing pretty okay a few years after Kanabi. With marked improvement in not trying to actively murder each other when it was time to find out who'd pay for team dinner. They even had a whole schedule for who'd pay and everything. It made Minato cry tears of joy when he first saw that while Kakashi was trying not to

have a breakdown as Minato cried and Kushina laughed herself to death while Obito was trying to impress Rin with his meager wallet. They were more cohesive as a unit, too, probably. The jury's still out sometimes on missions when things go down south fast and squabbles broke out between all of them on who's bright idea led them down this path to maybe taking out a tyrant (Kakashi maintains that it was definitely Rin's fault, but Rin seems to think otherwise, and Obito, being Obito, sided with Rin). But Kakashi thinks they've gotten better at relying on each other on missions and out.

Life for Kakashi was going pretty okay, too. He felt less like a stranger in his own skin and had even gotten up the courage to visit the Hatake compound again to pay respects to his father. Minato definitely cried about that after Kakashi told him. Not in front of Kakashi, but he could smell the waterworks coming.

Somethings changed in his life. One being Rin no longer had romantic inclinations for him. Probably after seeing him be an absolute mess with anything that wasn't murder. And it was probably an insult that she gave up so quickly after seeing him butcher cooking instant ramen, but Kakashi will take what he can get. Another change was Minato and Kushina got married. Which Kakashi saw coming, but it was still a pleasant surprise when the three of them were allowed to be the flower girls during their wedding. Obito had cried, vehemently denied to this day, and Kakashi came down with a case of the sniffles, too. They moved in together and somewhere along the way team 7 became a common fixture in their home.

Somethings, though, stayed constant. Such as Kushina and Minato's sappy love. Team 7 had to see that every morning and it was a mandatory team thing to groan as Kushina and Minato became all goopy and sappy. Another was Obito. Who, being Obito, held his crush on Rin. Because, well, he was Obito. Kakashi thinks that they've got a chance, maybe. Obito was less a shinobi disaster now. And a more competent human than Kakashi (Kakashi refuses to ever say this, ever).

Life was, as Kakashi noted, going pretty okay.

And then he started coughing up flowers.

emotional conversations, best to not get too involved (but it's different it it's your teammate)

Chapter Summary

> Kakashi awoke late in the night. Almost wondered if it were due to a nightmare or a stray sound of Naruto stumbling around. But instead, he felt something pressed up between his chin and mask.
>
> Kakashi pulled down his mask, finding a stray petal tucked neatly there.
>
> Then, almost as though part of a cosmic joke, he coughed and another stray petal joined its kin.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The day Kakashi started coughing out petals started out perfectly normal.

A perfectly bland (perfectly bland, Kakashi would like to stress, so bland that water probably has more flavor) breakfast (courtesy of Minato- Rin had to sneak them all condiments beneath the table, Kushina included).

Then, dropping Naruto off at the academy to moderate success (the boy wasn't staring at them with prank promising eyes so Team Minato considers it well done. Sasuke proved to be a good distraction).

Each team member went their own ways, well, Kakashi had tried but then Obito just had to go along with him because they were both jounin and both wanted to thicken their wallets.

(That limited edition of Icha Icha wasn't going to buy itself.)

Obito tried his best to grab Kakashi's latest Icha Icha from his hands while Kakashi viciously defended. Hopping from rooftop to rooftop while trying to read in peace. Peace that he was in limited supply of, at this point, with the birth of Naruto. Leading to Minato and Kushina's sudden staredown whenever Kakashi cracked his book open in front of their son.

(Kakashi gets it, corrupting influence and all that. But maybe they should've thought of that before making *Jiraiya* the kid's godfather if they wanted his life to be clear of corrupting influence. Kakashi was just the warm-up round, Jiraiya was going to punt Naruto's naivety through time and space and back.

Let it be known that Jiraiya was not one to let the sleeping dog lay.

Just look at Kakashi and his innocence, or lack thereof, nowadays. Minato had bemoaned his fate while Kushina had hunted the Sannin down for days for his major role in Kakashi's sudden dip in reputation and sudden gain in inappropriate reading materials.)

Obito had, predictably, lost in a test of speed racing to the mission desk. He was always the slower one of the two, Kakashi having to focus on speed while young since he lacked the reach and strength of his older opponents.

Obito graduated at an age that was normal and didn't quite have to compensate so much for his adolescent limbs. So Obito lost, despite his legs being slightly longer (Kakashi swears he was just a little shorter, but Obito held it against him anyway. It was maybe, probably, payback for the running joke of Obito being half plant matter.)

Kakashi, being Kakashi, had nabbed an A-ranked mission since he arrived first. Leaving with a teasing wave and shunshin much to Obito's chagrin. While A-ranks were certainly more tedious, he knew that Obito liked doing those since they were "important" and "I'm going to out-jounin you" (whatever that means) and "I need this pocket money for reasons that are much more important than you and your *Icha Icha*" (Kakashi would like to stress that this was an important factor in Kakashi's decision to go out of his way to annoy Obito).

Kakashi is petty, he never denies being such, and Obito was always so easy to annoy.

There were probably more A-ranks Obito could take. But he always wanted Kakashi's, for some reason. And so Kakashi left Obito to argue with the desk shinobi on why Obito should be the one to guard so-and-so's son, despite him being a terrible guard.

(His record on setting his charges on accidental fire was sky high, and not to mention the time he accidentally Kamui'ed to let a blade stab through him harmlessly and acted all smug and then, only then,

noticing that his charge was *right behind him*. Nevertheless, he was lucky that Rin was there and the wound wasn't fatal.

He was unlucky that Kakashi was there, however. Kakashi mentioned it in every conversation for a solid week before petering out when Obito did another stupid stunt that involved using a fire in the forest and then trying to put it out with his Mokuton because- "Come on, Mokuton can totally put out fire, how else can the first Hokage fight against the Uchihas if- oh shit, oh fuck-"

Obito forgets, Kakashi had thought as he watched the flames soared into the heavens with a sort of supreme detachment from the earthly realm, that he is not the first Hokage.

Kakashi had a lot of fun writing those mission reports, the desk-shinobi certainly have noticed the trend by this point as they've started telling him to maybe not overshare on how his teammates messed up each time. Chastised him before they even skimmed through the report every time Kakashi turned in his report early because they knew that he was eager to share Obito's latest fuck up, and Rin's, too- he'll never let her forget that time she went and forgot not everyone could breathe underwater and had almost drowned both him and Obito when she took them beneath the currents to hide from enemy shinobi.

But was Kakashi supposed to not share that with the world? Not have proper documentation that Obito let his charge get stabbed because he was way too excited to finally use his Kamui? Not have it immortalized that Konoha's forest could've burnt down because Obito was stupid enough to try to put out fire with wood because he swore the first Hokage somehow had fire resistant trees? Not have it cemented in words that *the* Nohara Rin, the desk-shinobi's golden child, almost murdered her teammates via drowning because it was relaxing and she lost track of time?

Impossible.)

So it was, Kakashi's day of relaxation. Watching some noble's son play with his friends while Kakashi stood idle, book in hand. His client hadn't taken well to Kakashi's penchant for unsavory reading materials or slouch. But Kakashi had a reputation and the man knew he wasn't likely to get anyone better, despite his shinobi's unique habits.

Kakashi had made sure to watch the kid as he trapeze outside. Moving

with little stealth, yet making up for it in grandiose and a posture that screamed “Yes, look at me, noble son, right here!” It was a beacons for bandits, truly. And Kakashi understands why the client had wanted to hire a jounin.

A couple of disposed bandits and a noble heir drop off later, Kakashi was back in Konoha. Slouching his way to the bar wherein shinobis crowded the place. It was one of those busy days. Wherein shinobis grew rowdy with liquor in their veins and good company at their side. He made Pakkun greet the Yondaime for him. Knowing fully well the man would not take well to the cuts on Kakashi’s hand. Made by a bandit’s crude knife.

It wasn’t going to kill him, Kakashi thinks. Probably. An infection was doubtful, but possible. But Kakashi would rather not go to the hospital. Wherein many angry medics await. Ready to fill his ears with how “leaving early isn’t healthy, Hatake” or “please stop escaping through the window and subsequently make the Hokage leave his office to fetch you, Hatake.”

(Kakashi knew his sensei took great glee in having an excuse to leave that dour place of paperwork. But the man was a shining example of a good Hokage, apparently and so nobody believed Kakashi.)

Kakashi had joined the conversation sparsely. Preferring to listen rather than to speak as he idly flipped through the worn pages. Anko made a teasing comment wherein Kakashi had tapped her forehead gently with the orange cover. He was sure that Anko would’ve gone for his throat if Kurenai wasn’t there to stop her. Asuma had laughed and lit his cigarette, to which Anko gave a baleful stare. Target changed in a heartbeat.

A few glasses drunk, only moving down his mask wherein there was a distraction, of course, and Kakashi was set for the day. Anko having challenged Asuma to some card game or another as Kurenai watched on from next to her, amused. They were enraptured in their competition. For all that Anko seemed like a physical shinobi, she was once Orochimaru’s apprentice. And while Asume had all the posture of an idle shinobi, Kakashi had seen the way the man loved to play shogi with the stray Nara here and there.

Kakashi just knew who exactly Naruto’s Nara friend, Shikamaru, was going to get for a jounin.

The walk towards Minato’s home was quiet and peaceful. The night

sky looming above as the streetlights casted his shadow along the pavement. It is often, on walks like these, that Kakashi reflects. His eyes roaming over words that he doesn't quite read. His mind roaming to things beyond. The tentative peace beneath his feet and the calm that had overtaken Konoha.

It felt surreal, somehow. Kakashi had expected to die for his village before he reached his full height. While war was in its peak. Expected many things and almost saw to his teammates dead. Yet there they were, whole and hale. It was on nights like these, that Kakashi felt almost relaxed.

The tense edge of shinobi life worn down by the strange peace that had overtaken his life and hadn't left since.

"Had fun on your babysitting mission?" A pat on his back and a wry grin that was all too familiar. "I sure did enjoy beating up those strong missing-nins on *my* mission."

"Ah, the courier mission," Kakashi replied back to just as smoothly, glancing up slightly at Obito. Obito sputtered, offense written all over his face.

"It was *super secret and super important,*" Obito said, stressing the last few words. Rolling his eyes to show his annoyance. It was an artform, by now. How Obito could do so with only an eye.

"I never said it wasn't," Kakashi replied cheerfully. Eyes curving up into something resembling joy that he knew Obito found annoying. "Super secret and super important, of course."

Obito sighed. A hand massaging the back of his nape. A motion that Kakashi knew was a behavioral tick that meant Obito was thinking about something. "Makes me feel like a genin again, you know." And there it was, Uchiha Obito's Hour of Reminiscent.

"But these are super secret and super important documents, hardly materials for a genin," Kakashi said. Eyes flickering between the shadowed pages of the book and Obito's scarred face.

"Don't mock me, Bakashi," Obito retorted. Bringing a hand to nudge at Kakashi's head. Almost playfully.

"I wasn't." Kakashi raised both his hands, one still holding onto Icha Icha, into a gesture of surrender. "You are a jounin, Obito, and there's not enough dangerous assignments to go around. Especially since,

well.” Kakashi shrugged, gesturing around him. “It is peacetime, after all.”

“You got an assassination mission last week,” Obito pointed out mullishly. His jaw stiff and his fists clenched. And well, we can’t have that, can we.

“Hardly anyone important.” Kakashi jostled his shoulder against Obito’s. “And you had one three days ago.”

“Yeah, but-” Obito stopped himself before shrugging. “I guess you’re right.”

Kakashi knocked the cover of Icha Icha against Obito’s face. “Going on a few courier missions doesn’t mean you’ve lost your place as one of the Yellow Flash’s deadly students, Obito. Minato-sensei know that you can handle yourself just fine, look, you’re a jounin, aren’t you?”

Kakashi withdrew his book, bringing it back below his head. He wasn’t reading it, now. Glancing at the words on a page and merely understanding that they were supposed to mean something.

It took a moment for Obito to grouse from his usual slump. His posture relaxing, and Kakashi could tell Obito didn’t noticed he was tense in the first place.

Being stuck in a loop between hospital and Hokage had taken a toll on Obito. Taken off the missions roster for the time being as he was deemed too injured to do so.

They all knew it was due to his half grafted on skin. Made of the first Hokage’s cell. Too valuable to let be loose in wartime and before Obito could control it at all. Disastrous if taken in by the wrong hands, the village elders had thought.

And so Obito stayed in the village. Left behind (it was an ugly term for it, but it was true, wasn't it? Left behind to be trained into something greater, was what the Hokage had said. Their team hated it, but they were in no position to question the Hokage) as Kakashi regained his health and were allowed back on missions. Rin was taken off the mission roster, too, but she got to apprentice under Kushina. While Obito was given no one but strict jounins that they knew were ANBU. Kakashi was glad, though, that Obito had Rin to keep him company as Kakashi was sent out on missions. That perhaps, if he was felled, at least Obito would have Rin. Even as peace loomed on the horizon Obito was restricted to the village. He grew almost gloomy, befitting

of an Uchiha, almost. His scowl could blend him right in. It pulled in a way that felt natural, somehow, on Obito's face. His frustration coming out with each word and action. As he rebelled against the orders that he could. Pushing himself towards unseen limits.

(“I’m going to become Hokage, one day,” Obito had promised. It echoed the words of the Uchiha black sheep that wanted to fit in. Except it was infinitely more bitter. Mixed with the tinge of the desperation of *wanting* to be anything at all other than trapped. Wanting power so that he would never be confined.

Kakashi had wondered, then, if Obito had regretted coming back. That perhaps it would be easier if Obito was allowed to be free outside of Konoha.

But then Rin would be dead, and Kakashi would be adrift. And perhaps it was selfish of him, but Kakashi was glad that Obito came back, even if it turned out the way it did.

“I’ll wait for when you pass your jounin exam first,” Kakashi had said, almost quietly. Feeling something like guilt and shame crept up his mask. Of a thousand and one replies that were more comforting, that was more reassuring that he knew he could’ve said but didn’t. He played with the edge of his mask, almost shifting his feet if it weren’t so ingrained in him to stay still as a shinobi.

Obito had turned to him then and blinked, staring at him a moment too long. Kakashi thought to apologize, for a moment. To apologize for the many things that he couldn’t say and the comforts that he couldn’t bring.

And then Obito had smiled.

“Just you wait, Bakashi.” If the corner of Obito’s eye was red, they said nothing about it. Letting Kakashi watch over him on the training around as Obito pushed his hand against a tree. Looking away with a smile still on his lips.

It felt as if part of the old Obito had came back. But that wasn’t true, was it, Kakashi had thought. Staring at the straight back of a boy who came back from the dead.

The old Obito never left.

He just grew up, was all.

He got to grow up because he was alive, and Kakashi-

Kakashi could get to know *this* Obito, rather than just a version of him that Kakashi never really knew at all. Languished away on the memorial stone, instead of here. Before Kakashi. So close he could touch.)

“That’s soon to be Hokage to you,” Obito said. A smile pulled at his scar. “Not simply a jounin.”

Kakashi let out a huff of laughter. “Maa, if you’re thinking about usurping Minato-sensei I’m afraid I’ll have to stop you.”

Obito rolled his singular eye again. Bumping his shoulder against Kakashi’s. “I’m alright not dealing with paperwork for a while.”

Kakashi smiled again, his eye curving up in a way that he knew annoyed Obito. “Minato-sensei would be so sad to hear that.”

“You’re not telling on me, are you?” Obito raised an eyebrow. Almost like a lofty Uchiha. Yet the grin at his lips was wholly Obito.

“Depends on whether someone will buy me a certain limited volume of Icha Icha coming out to our local bookstore on-”

Obito interrupted him by pulling down Kakashi’s hia-te to cover up both eyes. Kakashi whined as he did so, making a point of fumbling around.

“Buy your perverted books yourself,” Obito announced ruthlessly, a hand coming at Kakashi’s elbow to guide him around. They both knew that Kakashi could simply pull back up his hitai-ate. Or good enough to navigate the streets while blinded. But Kakashi didn’t comment on it and neither did Obito.

“I’ll be waiting for it in front of my room,” Kakashi announced cheerfully.

Obito rolled his eye, then. Kakashi knew that much, sight or no.

And Obito had smiled, too. Kakashi was sure of it.

Kakashi smiled back.

Kakashi’s life was, he reluctantly admitted, pretty okay.

"And don't think I'm letting your hands go untreated." For being a one-

eyed being, Obito was pretty observant, Kakashi thought. "You're going to have so much fun with Rin." Kakashi can hear the shark-like grin and he feels betrayed.

On second thought, maybe it wasn't going pretty okay, after all.

Kakashi awoke late in the night. Almost wondering if it were due to a nightmare or a stray sound of Naruto stumbling around. But instead, he felt something pressed up between his chin and mask.

Kakashi pulled down his mask, finding a stray petal tucked neatly there.

Then, almost as though part of a cosmic joke, he coughed and another stray petal joined its kin.

Something cold and terrible settled in his gut, then. And Kakashi felt like death has crawled over him as the night grew terribly cold around him.

And perhaps death has.

Kakashi knew what it meant, the flowers in his lungs.

But for all his genius, he couldn’t figure out who.

(Kakashi was always good at being in denial.)

Chapter End Notes

the idiots in 'idiots in love' is kakashi, he is both of the idiots. the plural is needed bc homeboy doesn't know who he's in love with despite the signs slapping it in his face lmao.

i hope yall enjoy this chapter!! the hanahaki has started haha, sorry it took so long to set it up. next chapter will have more hanahaki for sure <3

feel free to leave a comment on your thoughts!! i love hearing from yall and will try to respond <3

don't let your team figure you out (unless they invite you for dinner)

Chapter Summary

> kakashi would like to say that he had tried his best to be in denial. too bad his team was a master of guilt tripping him by now.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kakashi held the two petals in his fingers. So delicate they were. Hard to imagine that they would end up killing him later when they were in full bloom.

He knew that the flowers that these petals would one day become mean something. A hint towards his love and whoever he was besotted with. Kakashi didn't take those classes, though. The ones on flowers and their meanings. Was pushed out quickly after learning how to kill rather than how to decipher messages via flowers.

Kakashi was expected to be a frontline combatant and he did his duties well. Perhaps it spoke something to irony when he died to flowers rather than an enemy shinobi.

Kakashi wanted to laugh at the situation, but his lungs felt too brittle. It shouldn't feel like that. Not while during its beginning stages at least.

A spark of chakra and the petals were charred in his hands. The sound of quiet thunder, a small spark as the room lit up before it vanished. The charred remains of the petals burned hot in his hands. Kakashi wondered if it were due to the heat remaining or if it were something else.

He waved his hand slightly. Letting the remnants fall to wherever they would. Unrecognizable from their original form.

He settled back into his bed. The pillow soft and cold beneath his head. The faint smell of lightning brought him an odd comfort. Like nights spent out on the battlefield. Sitting around the campfire with thunder on his fingertips. Slightly charred and burnt but *alive*.

Knowing that he'll get to live to see another day when his enemies won't.

On nights like these, Kakashi hardly got any sleep.

He remembered the first time he learned about it. After his father's death and before his team's close collapse. Spite and loneliness etched into his bones. Bitter and willing to do whatever it takes to prove that he wasn't like his father- he would be stronger, better, and wouldn't be a disgrace so just *stop looking at him.*

Seeing the clan compound and unable to see anything but his father's corpse laying on its side. Blood stained the floor beneath the man's form. Tainting the whole compound with his *disgrace.*

(Being angry was always so much better than being lonely and regretful and- *I didn't even say goodbye-*)

Then, on a one off mission, he'd seen a Konoha shinobi spat out bloody petals around their camp. His body was wracked with violent coughs. Minato looked on with grim horror.

Kakashi had asked what it was quietly. Watching the flames soar and curiosity taking over.

It was a disease born out of love. When you love someone so desperately yet the love isn't returned. Your chakra did something, made life grow where it should not as it went haywire.

That was stupid, Kakashi thought. He hadn't said it, he had enough tact to understand that you shouldn't simply say that about someone that was dying. He has already faced enough scrutiny as is.

Kakashi felt small and pathetic under Minato's stare. The man hadn't said anything but Kakashi can feel his disappointment all the same. Perhaps the man had expected Kakashi to be better, somehow. Kakashi thought he was good enough. Thought he'd proven himself to his teacher. Thought they'd had an understanding, from one genius to another.

It almost felt like a betrayal. Kakashi barely bit back an ill-timed comment, one that would earn him a mark for insubordination in the report. Kakashi instead focused on the fire, poking at it with restrained anger. He felt childish then, so he had ceased.

Instead he had taken to sitting stock still beneath the trees on the border of Konoha. Obito and Rin chattering away and taking furtive glances at the sick shinobi. Their eyes lit with sympathy and Kakashi had to bite back a searing comment for that, too. Minato had joined him in his silence. Kakashi found that he couldn't read the man's expression nor did he want to. He didn't want to feel judged, not when he was *right*.

The shinobi was the stupid one for falling in love when he was a shinobi and during wartime of all times.

A moment later, Minato had started speaking again. Talking about the cure in a hushed voice. It was clear that while Minato was displeased with Kakashi's attitude, he wanted to at least educate him.

It made Kakashi feel incredibly petty and childish, to feel a grudge when Minato could get past it because he knew that Kakashi needed the knowledge even if he thought it was useless.

As Minato got to the second cure, the one that was less like a fairy tale and more like reality, his voice had gone soft. A note of sadness coloring his voice and demeanor.

Why don't they all opt for the second option, Kakashi had asked. Keeping the edge out of his voice. The utter inanity of it all. Just get the surgery and be done with it, was Kakashi's thought process. Efficient and simple.

Minato had simply smiled. Small and sad.

"I hope you'll never understand," Minato had said, finality in his voice.

They lapsed into silence again. Minato wore an expression that made him look double the age he was.

"I will never understand," Kakashi promised, the weight of his father's tanto heavy on his back. "And even if I did love someone that much, I'd rather be rid of it than… than-" he glanced at the shinobi coughing his lungs out. "Than be like that." Pathetic, was the unspoken word. Weak.

Minato had simply smiled. Small and sad. And said nothing more.

Kakashi thinks his younger self would see him now and scowl. All

bitterness and spiteful. Would rather kill Kakashi than let himself be brought down so low. Be weak and un-shinobi and *dead* because of emotions, just like his father.

His father had been a hero, though. Kakashi had later learned, even if the majority doesn't agree with the sentiment.

But you won't die a hero, he could hear himself biting back. You'll die a lovesick fool.

That was true. But Kakashi wasn't going to die, not if he went with the second cure.

(The first cure was impossible. He knows it for a fact.)

Why the delay then? Young Kakashi would ask if he were here.

Kakashi pondered the question for a moment, and then he'd say-

Life went on. Even if Kakashi had wanted to grab it by the reins to pull it in. To let him have more time before the inevitable fall.

He still refused to acknowledge who his flowers bloomed for. It felt like it would finally cross a line, one that he could never step back from. That it would leave him breathless and worsen everything about the situation.

If he ignored it, perhaps he could pretend to be normal around them and not feel the aching pain of his heart being pierced by thorns that would come if he dared to even think of his lips crashing against theirs.

He continued on his missions. Careful to not overexert himself and get injured. A trip to the hospital and the house of cards he found himself building would collapse. Then would come the concern and prying that Kakashi didn't want to deal with.

Kakashi's life went on, even if he avoided Team Minato in a way that was entirely coincidental. Too many missions that stretched on a bit too long. Too many reports to fill out that he was very late on. Too many training sessions with Gai to catch up on.

It displeased them, he knew.

But he also knew the consequences of meeting his team again while he was like this. Of them finding out and nothing ever being the same

ever again.

Even if he knew they would find out after his surgery. Where his heart would be taken out in exchange for his life. Kakashi didn't want to face the fallout of it.

He had thought, selfishly, that perhaps it'd be easier for him in the future to deal with it.

That was a concern for future Kakashi. Current Kakashi would like to spend his time in peace and block any attempts of his brain thinking about any romantic scenarios.

The beginning of the crash came soon enough. Kakashi's attempts to restrain himself fall into ruin at his feet.

Rin and Obito had cornered him one day. All angry eyes and, "how dare you ditch us." Kakashi had focused on his book instead of their faces. Trying to concentrate on the words instead of his desire to simply look up and see his teammates after what felt like months.

Kakashi tried to placate them, stating something about his wallet being too empty and suddenly growing a sense of responsibility.

It was a shitty explanation, even Kakashi could hear it. Naturally, his team had seen through it as well. They grew angrier. Something like concern lacing their voices as they asked him what was going on, why he was suddenly so absent, and how Naruto missed his older brother.

That was a dirty move, Kakashi begrudgingly thought. Naruto had a way of guilt-tripping you. So Kakashi acquiesced, promised to spend more time with them.

Maybe he has grown weak. His resolve faltered in the face of his team. Realizing that maybe there was no point in cherishing his limited time if he wasn't going to at least enjoy it. Make something out of this whole thing, love with all he's got before he could never do so again.

They might find out. But not if Kakashi was careful, he bargained with himself. The nails cut into his palm as he curled his hand inside his pocket and nodded to them. Reassured them that they were still his friends and that he was alright and "why, I didn't know you all cared so much for me."

"We care for you," Rin had said, stubborn as a mule. "You're Kakashi."

It was stated so simply. The sky was blue and they cared for Kakashi not because of anything else but because he was just Kakashi, socially inept and slouching figure and all.

“Even if you’re a sleazy idiot,” Obito tacked on, clearly uncomfortable with all the discussion of feelings.

Kakashi had laughed, glad that it didn’t sound as brittle as he felt. Ready to shatter if touched wrong.

“Well, if you wanted to make me feel better there’s one way about it.” Kakashi brought up Icha Icha in all its glory, wriggling his eyebrows obnoxiously.

Obito scrutinized the book for a moment, the edges of his ears seemed to burn red.

“Sleazy idiotic pervert,” Obito corrected, glancing away and rolling his eyes. “Don’t joke about that.”

“No, we’re not going to buy the newest volume for you,” Rin agreed, fondly exasperated.

“A shame,” Kakashi said. Bringing the book back to cover part of his face as it was intended.

“Oh,” Obito had said. Sounding so gobsmacked for a moment before hurrying away at record speed.

“What’s the rush, Obito, why don’t you help a grandpa cross the road?” Kakashi heckled, focusing his eyes on the words below.

“Shut up, Bakashi, or else I’m asking Minato-sensei to cook us dinner,” Obito threatened. Refusing to slow down at all.

Kakashi made a gasp of great horror, Rin laughed at them both.

It felt like things were normal again. Kakashi hadn’t realized he’d missed this. Like a breath held onto for too long before he realized that he needed to breathe.

Everything crumbled so easily.

It was such a simple thing, too.

Team dinner was spent around the table. Complimenting Rin on her

new recipe and watching Naruto practically buzz with excitement before he started to eat. They all shared a laugh, Minato and Kushina were practically goop. Wrapped around the boy's tiny pinkie finger, no doubt, two of Konoha's greatest shinobi.

Chatter flowed idly, Kakashi catching up on what his teammates were doing on his time spent away, while they did the same for him. The conversation was mild, nothing exciting, and it was normal. It was fine.

Then Rin had said something or another, a joke, that made Obito laugh and the rest of the table laugh with him. Kakashi, who spent the majority of dinner locking eyes with his team's foreheads, couldn't help but take a glance at Obito's smile. His own lips formed a quiet curve all by itself.

Obito's laugh was the infectious kind. The kind that made everybody want to laugh along and gravitate towards him. His broad shoulders shaking with humor, so grown from the boy he was before, yet still having the same charisma. It was the kind of laugh that made Kakashi want to lean over and pull down his mask to kiss Obito stupid.

That was when Kakashi had crossed the invisible line.

A cough escaped him before he could even think to muffle it, then another, seemingly coming all at once with vengeance. Kakashi could feel the petals on his tongue, the numerous others rushing up his throat.

They all turned to look at him, not concerned- not yet.

Kakashi smiled, tried to amidst his coughing fit, stating something about how he'd choke laughing so hard. Tried to play it off casually as if he hadn't finished his dinner earlier. He stood up, surprising himself when his legs didn't wobble, and excused himself with one excuse or another as he Shunshin away. Another cough threatened to overtake him entirely.

He was in his apartment before he knew it. Wheezing in a way that made him think that maybe this was *it*- that this was the way he'd die. Imagining Uchiha Obito's lips pressed against his own instead of the flowers rushing out of his mouth. Smothered to his lips by his mask. Imagine the way Obito's hand would feel, held against his instead of the coarse material of the mask as he pulled it down in a rush of desperation.

Yellow petals scattered around the floor of his apartment, stained with the color of blood. He coughed and coughed, feeling the build-up finally breaking into a dam as he thinks about Obito. His laugh, how would his lips feel if Kakashi just kissed him. How he'd look, flustered or angry. Whether he'd reciprocate or if he'd punch Kakashi. Whether he'd look up at Kakashi and think of the same thing.

He knew Obito doesn't. Not when he was coughing his life away. But the "what if" haunted him all the same. The way Obito would look at him if he were in love with Kakashi in the same way Kakashi was in love with him.

Whether Obito would come back from the dead for Kakashi as he did for Rin.

The thought sobered Kakashi up. A wet bucket of water dumped on him as Kakashi heaved. Shallow breaths amidst the pain of his body and palm, nails digging bloody crescents into it as Kakashi resisted the urge to make a sound at all. His imagination stopped short and yet his coughing fit only continued, muffled by a hand and his will. Thinking of the many stab wounds that he received that hurt less than this.

(Obito wouldn't come back for Kakashi.

Kakashi still remembered their brittle friendship even after everything. How Kakashi's words couldn't bring Obito any comfort.

Kakashi was sharp edges and born to hurt. Incompatible with someone like Obito who was rough and stubborn but so bright beneath it all. How effortlessly he'd hurt Obito if he wasn't careful with his words. How he had done so before and made Obito angry in turn to cover up his hurt. They weren't good for each other, weren't meant for each other.

Kakashi's edges hadn't dulled over the years. Instead, it was hidden beneath a veneer of aloofness and idleness. Kakashi still couldn't bring comfort to anyone like this but at least he wouldn't hurt them.

He was their valued and treasured junior, Kakashi can tell that much, but he could never be the recipient of Obito's romantic interest.)

Later Kakashi would burn the petals, their number concerning but nothing major. Not yet. He opened the window to let the smell of smoke drift away. He knew he wouldn't get any substantial rest tonight.

The next morning Kakashi woke up on his bed with a blanket draped over him. Both of which weren't there the night previous. The window that he'd open was closed. A familiar- comforting- scent lingered in the air and Kakashi *wondered.*

Life went on after Kakashi passed the invisible line of no return. Normalcy was out of reach out, a distant dream.

His health was deteriorating at an increased rate. He felt like wheezing whenever he was in extended combat. His lungs burned and his throat itched for a cough. His body grew weaker as the flowers took root inside his lungs. Depriving his body of its needed air.

Kakashi could tell that his usage of the Sharingan grew less with time. His body was being deprived of chakra. The flowers use that to grow and grow. Sapped on all his needed energy until he'll have nothing left to give.

This was why shinobi were recommended to have treatment as soon as possible.

Shinobis often waited until the last stages of their life to do so. Their reasons all varied, but the ending was most often the same. Flowers dug out of your chest and in its place a grave. The heart was gone, but the body lived on. Feeling emotions but never quite right again, always a bit off. A bit wrong. A sense of a piece of the puzzle being missing, yet never quite caring enough to figure out what it was.

He had seen shinobis fresh off the table. Absentminded, disconnected from reality itself. But they were healthy and they were loyal and at the end of the day they were fine, physically. They eventually got better, became adjusted to the empty space inside their chest that would never heal over quite right.

But they got better in all the ways that mattered. Maybe they'll get to die honorably. Be memorialized upon a slab of stone or perhaps getting to retire and regale young academy students with tall tales and then laugh and go home, alive in every way except those that mattered.

The flowers took something when it left your chest. Memories, emotions, everything and anything that made shinobi human. That made shinobi loved that someone so fiercely, taken away with a cut of a scalpel.

The price paid differed for each shinobi. Some had it worse than others.

The more you loved, the more you lost. The hope of early surgery was to at least dig out the flowers before the feelings could spiral further. So that at least you'd get some memories for yourself to keep at the end of it all. And maybe face the person you once loved with your whole life and feel a smidgen of *something.* Be able to smile at them and recall their name.

Instead of being left without a single trace of their smile, unable to remember what their name was despite your eyes snapping to theirs even amidst the crowd, an automatic instinct from a time you had forgotten. Even if you could spot them from a thousand others, ears straining for their voice even if you wouldn't recognize it. Even if some part of you instinctively knew that they were important but there were no memories left to prove it.

Knowing that there was a vast void inside your chest and they were the exact shape of it and yet unable being unable to remember why at all or why you should even care.

To see the flower that reminded you of them and having your throat itched and yet feeling nothing at all.

It was inane, how shinobis often refused until the very end. Only agreeing when on their last legs. Kakashi had thought so when he was young and he still thought so now.

It was stupid and insane. To let this develop any further. To eventually have the memories of Obito dug out of his chest in exchange for his life. To look at Uchiha Obito smile after it all and just wonder who he was instead of wondering how his lips would feel on Kakashi's.

The whole world would know that Hatake Kakashi loved Uchiha Obito, enough to die for him. Kakashi lets out a wet laugh at the thought. It was painfully amusing, but no.

He took out a blank journal and began scribbling.

He would lose his memories, but he could at least write down who Obito was to him before it all. So that perhaps Kakashi could act for a lifetime. Parse together his memories which had been cut away. Put together a semblance of a life which he had lived with someone named Uchiha Obito. Act it out to save them all the trouble, pretend that he was just as normal as the day before the surgery till the day he

dies due to things other than love and flowers.

So that at least his love wouldn't be broadcasted to the entire village. So that perhaps, when he look at Obito again, he would at least think "Oh, I had wanted to die for you, Uchiha Obito" instead of wondering what his name was.

Even if the flowers needed a price, Kakashi would at least keep his memories. Written on flimsy scraps of paper.

That night, after crossing the line, Kakashi had dreamed.

The young Kakashi stared up at him with angry eyes. Repeating the same question.

Why the delay then? Young Kakashi asked, his face morphing into a scowl.

Kakashi had simply smiled and repeated his answer.

I hope you'll never understand, he said, a hypocrite down to his bones. Stupid and foolish and utterly in love with Uchiha Obito.

Chapter End Notes

> kakashi: i do not love this man
> obito does a basic action
> kakashi: goddamnit you got me

leave the rumors well enough alone (unless they get too close to home then maybe it's time to do something about that)

Chapter Summary

kakashi and his no good decision making skills

And also time spent with obito (which is also a no good decision)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Rumors came to disrupt Kakashi's idyllic life. It was understandable. Kakashi developing a new cough were grounds for some kinds of rumors to pop up. And there was enough peace around for Konoha shinobi to start to grow restless and bored.

Kakashi was familiar with this song and dance. Being one of the Yondaime's students usually warranted a few rumors being made about him or his team. It came with their notoriety. The vicious rumors were usually stomped out easily enough, it wasn't tolerated. But the idle ones, the ones that really didn't mean anything at all were left to their own.

Kakashi usually played dumb, or deaf, and made a career out of using such blatant lies and diversion tactics until the rumors died down. It worked well, shinobi were notorious gossip and once the craze of the new died down they moved on quickly.

Kakashi had thought they'd move on quickly this time around, too. But they didn't. The rumors lingered on. Even as Kakashi continued to blatantly lie his way through anything remotely resembling an explanation. Kakashi could start to see the inquisitive glances of his teammates and everything he just wondered if this was it. If this was the time they'd notice why he was coughing.

So far no one has dared to insuintate the obvious. The thin veneer of manners holding them back.

But Kakashi could tell that time was ticking. And he was right.

“You think he has it? The flowers.” The chuunin who said it was new. He was sure he’d seen their face on the Hokage’s desk as the man contemplated who to promote from the latest chuunin exams. The chuunin was new and brash and all too eager to delve into the fold of something he was only allowed to be on the fringes of before.

The conversations lulled around the bar. Eyes flitting to Kakashi’s figure. Tucked in a corner as his eyes traced words that he wasn’t quite reading. Kakashi pretended to not hear the chuunin. Absorbed in his book. Keeping his chakra under wraps and layers as he tried to not grip his book too hard and tear the pages.

Kakashi had to do something about this before he couldn’t. Before it grew, like an infestation on a wound left to rot.

“Kakashi,” Minato said sternly. “You can’t keep on asking me for S-rank missions like this.”

Kakashi knew he was right. He couldn’t keep doing A and S-rank missions like this. All the while only letting the medic-nin heal the shallowest of injuries and nothing else.

“Sensei,” Kakashi said, pleading. “I need to do this.”

It broke Minato’s heart. Kakashi knew this. Minato always had a soft spot for Kakashi. Having seen him gone through his father’s death and everything else. The man considered himself Kakashi’s parental figure, even if neither of them verbalize it. Kakashi appreciated it. The soft affection and careful approach.

But now was not the time for that. Not when the rumors were so dangerously close to home.

Minato sighed. “You’re going to do something worse if I don’t, aren’t you.”

Kakashi nodded, his shoulders relaxing. “You know me too well, sensei.”

“Be careful, Kushina is already close enough to skinning me alive,” Minato said. Resignation in his voice.

“I will, sensei, you know me.”

There was a point with all the A-rank and S-rank and missing nin’s

head that came rolling in that people got the hint that Kakashi's health was not up to debate. That he was going to prove to them one way or another that he was as strong as ever.

Especially since the ones he dragged on his personal driven missions were those that propagated the rumors. Worked down to their bones until they couldn't walk straight let alone have the energy to gossip.

He started to create his own rumors, just to be sure. Pointed back to a long past mission report. Wherein his younger self had derided a lovesick shinobi. Stating how they failed to cover his back due to their coughing bouts.

Hatake Kakashi was unkind, maybe. According to the new rumors. Unkind and rude but he wasn't *sick*.

He remember that mission, so long ago. After Kanabi and before now.

An Inuzuka had gone lovesick and had left his back undefended in the midst of a coughing bout. He had derided them in his report and gotten them temporarily suspended from shinobi duty until they resolved their issues.

Obito had marched up to him that day, all bravado and anger and spite. "How could you say that about Saori."

"He's a burden, Obito, not that I expect you to understand," Kakashi derided. Feeling himself tense as Obito's face contorted into something unpleasant and unkind. The boy's fist rearing back and Kakashi bracing for impact.

Obito's punch was weak. But it hurt nonetheless and Kakashi didn't know why.

"Are you done throwing your tantrum now?" Kakashi almost spat, holding back the burgeoning *hurt* that he felt. "Or are you going to continue acting like a *child*." That would hurt Obito he thinks. Feeling some sort of vindication.

Obito made a sound. His face set into a snarl. "Better a child than an unfeeling asshole like you."

"One of us has to be a good shinobi around here," Kakashi said back. Jabbing at where it hurt most. Obito's inadequacy and the way the unkind eyes followed him through the Uchiha compound.

"Fuck you," Obito said. The anger of it taken out by the way he looked. Young and unsure and everything in between. Kakashi didn't know why he only chose the words that hurt. Why he wasn't good enough to move past himself and not poke at unhealed wounds. "And here I thought you were actually getting *nicer*."

He was always incompatible with Obito. Even if he was trying- it was never enough.

They didn't talk for several weeks after that. And when they did, they pretended that the conversation never happened at all. It was for the best that way.

By that time, Kakashi figured out why it had hurt so much.

What about me? Kakashi had wondered. Staring into his teammate's scarred face, angry for someone else, angry at Kakashi. *What about the wound I got when they left it undefended? Why do you only care about Inuzuka?*

One day, as though Obito were sick of Kakashi's evasiveness, Obito had broken the tentative peace that had developed.

"What's going on?" Obito asked. His eye glanced down at Kakashi. Kakashi felt bare and defenseless. Like his heart was on display for Obito to see and judge.

"With what?" Kakashi asked with faux casualness. Hands in his pocket and playing remarkably well in his role as the idle jounin.

Kakashi was good at that, playing at being dumb and oblivious and just *leave him alone.*

Obito's eye was inscrutable. A storm raging inside them and Kakashi didn't know what for. He found that he liked that look, too. The broody one that was Obito seeing something and deciding that he didn't like it.

"You," Obito rasped, at last. "Just you."

Kakashi wanted to laugh. At the question and the answer hidden beneath his heart. Kakashi wanted to laugh until he lost his voice, until he stopped finding it funny and wanted to cry instead. As he glanced at Obito walking beneath Konoha's lights. The light catching in his eye, the faint red on his cheeks from the cold weather, the way

he stood slightly to the front of Kakashi as if he wanted to know what was wrong and protect Kakashi from it.

Kakashi thought of one excuse or another, finding his tongue already formulating it.

“Kakashi, *please,*” Obito said quietly. His face no longer scowled, instead replaced by bone deep exhaustion. “Everyone’s worried about you.”

Are you worried about me? Kakashi wanted to ask. The words growing stuck in his throat. *Do you care about me, in a special way?* Obito, worried. His team, also worried.

If only that didn’t make Kakashi’s heart beat the slightest bit faster.

A moment passed, and then two. Kakashi didn’t know what to say. Not that he couldn’t think of a truthful answer (because what else can he give to *that* other than the truth?), but because the real answer was utterly pathetic.

You, just you, Kakashi thought. *You’re what’s wrong.*

The thought made his throat itch and he hated it.

“It’s just-” Kakashi found his words again. “It’ll be over one day, don’t worry.” It was his best attempt at being reassuring. He’d already prepared himself for the day. Readied himself for the scalpel that would come and cut out his whole world and leave him with nothing. He chose a reliable doctor. One that had been in the profession for decades and knew exactly what to do with cases like him. One that wouldn’t offer him any pity because they didn’t have any left from the decades of it they’d used up from dealing with lovesick shinobi.

“At least go to the hospital?”

“I will, one day,” Kakashi said, and that was the truth. One day, when he couldn’t go on and do this anymore. Talk to Obito without vomiting up full fledged flowers.

“Promise?” Obito asked, sounding so lost. Reminded Kakashi of when he was younger. When he was louder and more naive. When Obito had looked at Kakashi and called him an idiot with full sincerity.

“Promise,” Kakashi said. And before he could think about it, he hooked his pinky finger together with Obito’s. He wanted to do more.

To slot all his fingers against Obito's and hold his hand for forever. To hold his hand and kiss him beneath the lights for anyone to see and to see Obito kiss him back and smile boyishly. The kind of smile that was halfway mischievous and halfway doting.

Kakashi found himself coughing quietly. Trying to muffle the sound to not let it ruin the moment. To let himself forget that his imagination was an impossibility and to let himself indulge in the what-ifs instead.

Later, in his new notebook Kakashi had trotted the walk down as a possible 'need to know' for future Kakashi. It was more indulgent than anything but he wanted to remember this, at least. The way Obito's hand radiates warmth, a few breaths away from his own.

Kakashi wrote lines and lines of a life with Uchiha Obito. Not sure what exactly he'll forget once Obito is erased from his life.

They met when they were so young, Kakashi realized. And Obito hadn't left since. Taking root in Kakashi's mess of a life and determined to stay and weather the storm.

Obito was with Kakashi for longer than half his life and then some. With him for every important moment in his life.

His life, Kakashi realized, almost breathless. Could be measured with Obito.

Obito was the yardstick that Kakashi outgrew but never really forgot. A constant in the ever shifting shinobi life. From the Obito of the academy where Kakashi began, to the Obito who tried to spend time with a Kakashi that was reeling after his father's death, to the Obito that refused to back down from Kakashi's angry stare as they were chosen teammates- not perfect enough- not good enough, to the Obito that had given up his eye to Kakashi as a jounin and farewell gift as Kakashi's shinobi code crumbled before his eyes, to the Obito that returned when Kakashi was at his brink, and to the Obito now, in the present, who made Kakashi feel safe and warm and in love enough to die for him.

Kakashi didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Wondered if this was life's irony.

He wondered if there'll be anything left at all when Obito is cut away from his heart. The yardstick finally laid to rest.

Kakashi's life was measured in Obito.

And in the wake of losing it all. Kakashi imagines a morning, where he wakes up in a hospital room, cold and lonely. Imagine waking up with Obito's name on his lips and then thinking nothing at all. Imagine reading through the pages of a well worn journal and wonder why the writer was such a fool.

Kakashi wonders if he'll have anything left at all, by the end of this. Any memories at all of a life well lived.

He coughed and coughed, and found that the act of coughing itself was better than what awaited him in that one, cold morning- not so distant away.

Kakashi took up photography. It came to him naturally, as Sukea, one of his favorite disguises. He hadn't bought a camera for Sukea before, not the fancy ones at least. Sukea was the standard shinobi who was lackadaisical and didn't have much funds, let alone to splurge on high end cameras.

Luckily for them, Kakashi was wealthy enough for both of them.

Pictures should be enough to help future Kakashi know what people looked like. Enough for future Kakashi to act through a lifetime.

(Remembering with the Sharingan was a terrible idea. Many Uchiha tried and just as many went mad with it.

They couldn't reconcile the unflinching love they saw through red tinted eyes and the dulled emotions from their own heart. It drove them mad. The conflict between heart and mind and everything in between.

Uchiha usually die with the flowers they grew. They weren't built to live without love. It'd drive them mad.)

Kakashi found himself being the photographer for Team Minato. When asked, he'd say something about a future scrapbook for them to look back on. He hopes that future Kakashi would indulge them in this, after Kakashi had worried them so much this was the least he could do.

One day he snapped a picture of Obito sleeping. Drooling on the makeshift pillow in his arms. Kakashi muffled a laugh and a cough.

Obito woke up anyway as the flash of the camera went off in his face. Kakashi choked down the mortification he felt that Obito's eye fixed on him. Instead trying something more sheepish and less, *Oh Sage what if he finds out that I want to kiss him right now.*

"Kakashi, no," Obito said, sleep still evident in his voice. Swatting idly away at Kakashi's camera. "You cannot add a picture of me sleeping to your scrapbook collection."

Kakashi was overwhelmed with a feeling of quiet fondness for this man. Drool and all.

"You mean the picture of you drooling." Kakashi set the camera down, feeling his lips quirking up all by itself.

"Naruto's going to see this in ten years and he's going to *laugh,*" Obito said, sounding like he was going to break into hysterics and cry. "I'm going to be the laughing stock of Naruto's team."

"Good, it's good to disillusion him," Kakashi replied, a laugh almost bubbling out of him as Obito made a sound of protest, Kakashi brushing through Obito's soft hair and wanting nothing more than to be able to brush through it for the rest of their lives. Wake up in the morning and get the honor of brushing Obito's hair as he wakes up, domestic and happy and *Oh, Obito, what am I going to do with you?*

Obito reached for Kakashi before pulling him down onto the couch with him. Limbs tangling with Kakashi's and curling up behind him. Obito was so close and so warm and Kakashi couldn't help but cough.

"Hey, hey," Obito said, concerned as he shuffled slightly to sit up and stare down at Kakashi. His eye still blurry from sleep and his hair stuck up in many directions. The blanket pooling around him and the light from the window hitting him just right.

"You," Kakashi said, desperately. And in that moment he wanted to lean up and mesh their lips together and tangle their limbs even further. Lose himself in the moment and in Obito. Tug on Obito's hair or smooth it over as he pushed their lips together. Watch as Obito reacts in the moment and see how he'd look at Kakashi. Imagine it through his mind's eye of Obito blushing or Obito grinning wolfishly and leaning down to kiss Kakashi right back.

The imagination broke into pieces as Obito only stared down at him, bemused. Exactly what his expression would be if Kakashi were to kiss him.

“That’s insubordination, no take backs,” Kakashi said in reference to being pulled down to the couch. Trying for cheeky instead of heartbroken.

Obito didn’t seem to notice and instead laughed, sounding so soft and wonderful.

Kakashi felt a blooming flower on his tongue and he knew.

Kakashi felt Obito sleeping behind him. Solid and warm and-

He coughed and coughed, muffled by his hands and the blanket. Wondering why stab wounds hurt more than this. Laying beside his friend and pretending that he felt nothing at all. He half wanted to grab for the camera, to memorialize this moment in time. Obito curled up behind him, content as a cat.

But this was enough, Kakashi thought. Future Kakashi didn’t need to know how Obito felt, curled up against Kakashi and made Kakashi’s heart pound with renewed vigor. Future Kakashi didn’t need to know how Kakashi was bursting with happiness and pain at the same time, wishing he were facing the other way so that he could see Obito’s restful face and imagine a future of the two of them together and cough even more because he didn’t care anymore. How fast the flowers grew, it didn’t matter anymore.

Taking a picture would cheapen the moment. Future Kakashi would look at the picture and wouldn’t know what to feel. Wouldn’t know who the man in the picture was or why past Kakashi had chosen to take the picture at all. Would just look at the picture and dismiss it.

Future Kakashi wouldn’t know who the picture was for or what it meant.

So it was better this way. For this moment to live and die with the Kakashi of the present and soon to be of the past.

What mattered was that Kakashi got to live with this. Got moments and pockets in time with Uchiha Obito that made his heart burst and his cheeks flush. It didn’t matter that he was speeding up his descent with each glance, each touch, each thought.

Kakashi’s heart felt full. So full and so in love and it was-

He’d forget this once the morning came and his heart was left empty

as a grave.

But in the present, in the flash of lightning before it all went dark, Kakashi wanted this. Wanted moments like these. Ones that were all too easily lost but were all the more precious for it. Because Kakashi wouldn't feel like this again, wouldn't get to remember this again.

Like lightning, striking hot and true, and then gone into the storm to give way to a clear and happy day.

If there was a day when Kakashi could pinpoint when he'd lost the race he never set foot on, it'd be day Obito woke up.

It was a few days after Kakashi nearly killed Rin. Obito collapsed the moment he saw Konoha's gates in the distance.

The day Obito woke up was a quiet one. It was Kakashi's turn to be by Obito's bedside. Minato off on a mission and Rin training with Kushina. Kakashi finished up his latest mission report when he saw Obito's eye snapping open.

Obito glanced around. His eye wide and his face slack in surprise as he locked eyes with Kakashi.

"Where's Rin?" Obito had asked. Breathless and wide-eyed and lost.

"She's with Kushina," Kakashi replied. Setting down his mission report. "She's safe."

Obito's eye was wild. Kakashi wondered what was going through his mind. What horrors he must've experienced before he reunited with them again. The grafted cells on his body didn't speak of a pleasant time, and his haggard face attested to that. His shoulders were hunched in all the wrong ways. Like he was preparing for some invisible enemy to take him away from Konoha and Team Minato.

"You're safe, too," Kakashi said. Breathless in wonder. "In Konoha."

Obito laughed, then, wet and garbled and everything ugly. Kakashi didn't comment on it as tears fell from Obito's eye. Obito futilely wiped at it furiously as his lips stretched into a disbelieving smile. It was the kind of grin that was a touch too tired to have come from Obito before, but Kakashi will take seeing any kind of smile from a teammate he thought dead.

Kakashi awkwardly handed Obito a handkerchief. Looking away from Obito's tears as Obito made a small sound. A huff perhaps, as he used it to wipe at his tears. Kakashi didn't say anything else. Letting Obito soak in the familiar atmosphere of Konoha's hospital and the Hokage monument just within view outside the window. The way one of Minato's chuunin vest hung on an empty chair and the way Rin had left her favorite books on the chair next to that, a conspicuous bookmark sticking out one of them. There were Kushina's instant ramen cups, stacked and ready to be consumed and lectured at by the nurses.

It took several moments. But it wasn't too late before Rin and Kushina dashed into the room.

"Obito-kun!" Rin sounded so relieved and Kakashi empathized with her. Seeing her dash towards Obito and drawing her arms around him gingerly. Kushina's eyes suspiciously rimmed red and a soft smile on her face as she watched them reunite. A hand on Kakashi's shoulder.

Obito's eye had looked so bright at that moment. As he saw Rin. As though she were his whole world and then some. As if she grounded reality to him. Seeing the sight of Rin alone was far more effective than any words Kakashi had to offer.

Kakashi had remembered a boy. A boy who, even while dying, had made him promise to protect Rin.

There really was no contest between the two of them. There never was. Kakashi never looked at Rin once and saw a rival. She was his dear friend and teammate. There was no contest between them because Kakashi had eyes and he understood the situation.

Rin was already at the finish line and Kakashi never started at all.

The notorious Team 7 luck was something that Kakashi had long embraced by now. But it was still a terrible reminder to have an S-rank missing nin appear on his barely A-rank mission, to investigate and take care of matters on Konoha's borders. Normally B-rank at best, but it apparently had sightings of rather unsavory missing nin so it was bumped up to A.

Coming face to face with Sasori was S-rank mission territory, though, and Kakashi stands by that fact.

They had a grudge, the two of them. Kakashi's father was the one that slain Sasori's parents. Sins of the father and all that. Still petty and definitely not right, but Kakashi digressed. Who was he to tell a missing nin how to cope?

He signalled for Genma to take Iroha and leave, Iroha was taken by surprise (all of them were) and having the stab wounds to prove it. He could use Kamui on them and Obito would probably come across them and bring them back to Konoha fast, but that would leave Kakashi in much too dire straits to put up any fight at all against Sasori. And while his control of Kamui had gotten better, Kakashi needed all the chakra he could get to face off against an S-rank missing nin.

A cough escaped Kakashi.

His control over Kamui was good, but he doubted he could use it even once now, with the way the flowers were sapping at his chakra.

A positive was that Kakashi managed to chase off Sasori. Both having laid fatal wounds on each other. Sasori's puppet body (and wasn't that a surprise, a puppet body for a puppet boy with puppet parents who Kakashi's dad had murdered and Sasori hadn't forgotten since) wasn't able to withstand the katon jutsu Kakashi had used.

Kakashi had an Uchiha teammate, Sasori should've expected deadly fire. It came with Uchiha territory. Fire hazards, the lot of them.

And Kakashi should've expected poison. Sasori was a vicious fighter, widely known for his puppet mastery but not so much for his poisons.

Not that Kakashi could avoid getting too close nor was his mask poison proof.

The flowers were definitely *not* helping right now. Kakashi was coughing and coughing and he didn't know whether it was due to the poison or the flowers and which one was worse.

Kakashi wondered how long it would take Genma to reach Konoha with Iroha on his back. Genma wasn't severely injured, but Iroha had taken a puppet's sharp razor hand to the shoulder and abdomen.

He passed out before he could think on it much further.

He wakes up to a hospital bed and *oh, joy*.

He registered the bland white ceiling and the blander white walls before coming face to face with Obito.

The sight of Obito's face alone made him want to cough. A slight frown was on the man's face, his arms crossed and he looked slightly tired and worse for wear than when Kakashi had seen him last. Kakashi wants to reach his hand over to smooth over the crease between Obito's brow. Tease him back into a fond smile and relaxed shoulders.

He doesn't think that tactic will work now. Not when the subject of Obito's ire was Kakashi himself.

"Obito," he greeted. His eyes crinkled into a weak smile. His hitai-ate gone from his side and his face covered partly by a medical mask that Rin must've somehow covered him with out of respect for his privacy and to not overwhelm him with the sanitized smell of the hospital when he woke up.

Rin was always so lovely. Kakashi was lucky to get her as a teammate.

"Kakashi," Obito said, breaking Kakashi out of his thoughts. *Not Bakashi*, which was another league of concerning. Low and gravelly and *hurt*. "When were you going to tell us that you have flowers in your lungs?"

Chapter End Notes

obitos pov next chapter!! I found that the order went better that way haha

regardless the chapters count have increased since i don't think I can finish this by 5 chapters

I hope yall enjoy this update and feel free to leave a comment!! i enjoy reading them vv much <3

uchiha obito's observation of his suddenly weird teammate

Chapter Summary

obito pov

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kakashi might like to play the secretive fool all he wants but Team Minato were experts in Hatake body language by now, so it was to no surprise that Team Minato understandably freaked the fuck out when Kakashi's body started to shake with the cough that sounded suspiciously wet behind his mask. As though he were unable to muffle it. Which was concerning all by itself, because Kakashi would normally try to play it off. If he didn't it meant that he *couldn't*.

Kakashi was never loud. On the contrary, he was one of the quietest shinobi, both on missions and personality wise.

But his coughs had sounded so *loud* in the homey space of Minato and Kushina's kitchen.

Obito was halfway across the table to grab a napkin or grab *Kakashi* and use Kamui to get them to the hospital. Rin was reaching out a hand on Kakashi's shoulder to check on his health. Minato was twitching in his seat and also ready to use Hiraishin to warp them to Tsunade in a stunning display of zero self control in face of his overprotectiveness. Kushina, for her part, was the mediator. Trying to be calm in the middle of the storm as she made sure that Naruto didn't catch on to the suddenly tense atmosphere.

Kakashi as if aware of their intent to worry the fuck out of him, stood up abruptly. He seemed strained with the effort and Obito wanted to say that maybe he should sit the fuck down then.

"Sorry, I choked on my food," the man said. His coughs still hammering away at his pathetic excuse. In all the years that Obito has known Kakashi, the man had always eaten everything in less than a minute and had never choked. "I have to check up on Mr. Ukki." Kakashi shot them a smile so fake that it *stung* then used Shunshin to get away from *them*.

They waited for a dozen minutes or two, Obito couldn't quite tell the time at that point. When it became clear that Kakashi wasn't going to come back, that he chose to be stubborn and was locking them out again, Team Minato exchanged glances.

"I'll go grab him, " Obito said. Grimacing as he knew that he had volunteered for the tough job of facing down Kakashi's stubbornness.

"Give him a lecture for me," Kushina replied. Smoothing over Naruto's hair as she smiled reassuringly down at the boy. Naruto already noticed Kakashi's disappearance and found it terribly sad.

Damn you, Kakashi.

"Sure thing." Obito gave a quick nod before using Kamui to drop himself off at the front of Kakashi's apartment. He could, theoretically, go inside. But Kakashi, being the paranoid shinobi that he was, probably rigged the whole thing with traps and Obito had no doubt that the man would clam up even further if Obito just appeared in his apartment.

(Even if Obito knew exactly how to evade the traps.)

So he knocked on the door.

Silence, not even the usual, "I'm busy today, Obito." Kakashi's words for *I'm not doing well today, please go away and we'll never talk about this again tomorrow where I'll have on a smile so fake it hurts and you can't do anything about it.* The coughs seemed to have subsided, Obito channeling chakra into his ears and hearing nothing. But maybe Kakashi had opted for Obito's advice and slapped on some silencing seals.

"Kakashi?" Obito knocked harder on the door. Silence. Worry sunk into his gut. Rancid and terrible. "Kakashi?" Obito repeated, louder this time. Hoping that Kakashi can hear him and wasn't unconscious or *dead.* It was probably illogical, for Kakashi to drop dead a mere half hour they had waited for him to come back and explain- which he never did.

Obito wasn't the one for logic on their team, that was Rin and Kakashi. Kakashi, one half of the brain on Team Minato, who might be *dead.*

Yeah, no, Kakashi could clam up all he wants later but Obito needed to know what the hell is happening *now.*

Kamui drained his chakra for the second time that night as he dropped himself into Kakashi's apartment.

The first thing he noticed was the heavy scent of smoke. Cloying his nose and surrounding him from all sides. It made him frown. Kakashi hated smoke, even for all the changes that he went through from young till now, Kakashi had always hated strong, unpleasant smell that sat too heavily on his sensitive nose. Even if he hid it better as an adult, there was no hiding how he would scrunch up his nose whenever he used Chidori or the way he'd pull his mask a bit higher as though that would help.

In those times, Obito would toss him a mint and watch Kakashi loosen up. Even if Kakashi whined about mint being too strong on his poor, poor nose, Obito knew that he preferred the heavy scent of mint over that of smoke.

("Are you bribing me?" Kakashi stared at him, almost judgemental. "I will have you know I won't be bought for a single mint."

Obito audibly groaned.

"But your offering is noted all the same," Kakashi said, his pen making a loud sound across the report as he crossed out something. Probably a remark about Obito accidentally burning down another part of Kusa. It wasn't his fault, really, who assigned Uchiha to Kusa without expecting some fire damage?

"You can just say thank you," Obito commented dryly. "Like a normal person."

Kakashi looked heavily offended and trotted down a sentence, probably way more demeaning than the one he'd scratched out. Obito proceeded to negotiate for his life because his salary can't take another hit.)

Obito wanted to snort at the memory. Kakashi could never be normal, even if he tried.

Team Minato wouldn't want him to be anything but Kakashi, oddities and all, anyways.

(*Obito* wouldn't want him to be anything else. Just Kakashi.)

He was snapped out of his nostalgic memory as the faint stench of blood hit his nose. It was underlaid with the smoke. Faint below it and

hard to notice at all. Obito cursed under his breath as he glanced down to notice Kakashi sleeping on the couch. His breathing labored and his frame shaking with the cold or something else. He was curled up on the couch, hunched up as though to shield himself from the world.

He looked uncomfortable, sleeping there. On a couch that was two sizes too small and as hard as concrete. His lanky limbs hanging off the couch in a way that would make Kakashi wake up with a crick in his neck. But he was breathing to Obito's relief.

"What are we going to do with you?" Obito sighed, sounding exhausted even to his own ears. Kakashi normally would have woken up by now. With the noise and chakra of someone else in his home. But he hadn't, and that was concerning. Obito weaseled his hands beneath Kakashi's body, lifting him up quietly and noting with more concern that Kakashi still hasn't woken up.

The walk to Kakashi's room was a short one, even if Obito had to walk somewhat awkwardly to avoid the traps Kakashi placed. The man was utilitarian and his apartment was the same. Small and confined and Kakashi really should stop being stubborn and just officially move in with Minato and Kushina already.

Kakashi's room didn't smell like anything at all. Good, it wouldn't do for him to die of smoke inhalation. Obito gently placed Kakashi on top of his bed. Covering the man with a blanket so that he would stop shaking. His breathing was still labored but he looked less sickly than before. Kakashi's hands grasping onto the blanket, sinking into the significantly softer cushion with a quiet sigh.

Coughs still escaped him but it was nowhere near as frantic as before.

"We are definitely going to have a talk," Obito said to his sleeping teammate. Kakashi didn't even react but Obito hopes he can feel it in his bones the amount of trouble he's going to be in the near future.

Obito stayed for a moment longer to make sure that Kakashi wasn't going to die. He closed the window in the living room before he left when the scent of smoke had cleared.

Something drifted out the window. A petal, maybe, he couldn't be quite sure. Its coloring was odd. Yellow tinted with red. Obito squinted his eye.

(Kakashi frowned, a rare expression on the much more relaxed man.

“What’s wrong, jealous?” Obito paraded around his bouquet of flowers for his date. Eyebrows wiggling obnoxiously.

“No,” Kakashi denied. Placing a hand silently beneath his nose as he resumed reading, could almost pass off as a casual movement.

There was something more there, but Obito couldn’t read far into it.)

Kakashi didn’t like flowers. *It smelled too strongly* was written all over the man’s body language whenever he passed a large body of flowers.

So what was that doing here? It could just be a stray petal, Obito reasoned.

But what if it wasn’t?

Team Minato wasn’t surprised when Kakashi began to distance himself. Toeing the line between being there and *not.* He vacated Minato and Kushina’s apartment entirely, which broke their hearts. Each time he went to dinner or some other activity with them he’d stare at that damn book of his. Even under Minato and Kushina’s admonishing glares. And when he’d look at them he wouldn’t make eye contact. Singular eye going anywhere but to theirs.

It was infuriating. Kakashi went about his day as though it were normal when it was anything but. The coughs continue to haunt him and it just wouldn’t stop ringing in Obito’s ears. And if Kakashi thought that nobody noticed his labored breathing after missions he was dead wrong. For all that Kakashi was a good deceiver, Obito was a better observer. It wasn’t hard to tell either, not when missions that Kakashi previously completed without breaking a sweat now left him slouched defensively and shoulders tense, breathing labored beneath his mask.

Every time a conversation veered a little too close to him Kakashi would ditch, spouting some bullshit excuse before using Shunshin to leave. He’d clam up the next day and refuse to meet them at all.

Obito could tell that everyone was on their last legs, not willing to push Kakashi any further unless they wanted Kakashi to be gone even *more.*

And so they were at a stalemate. All against Kakashi’s stupid stubborness to trust his team. Kakashi was regressing back into his shell, an old thing that they all thought he’d toss away by now. But it

was back with a vengeance, shrouding their teammate in his old jagged edges.

(Obito had thought that they'd gotten better. Had thought that they went somewhere and were going somewhere. So what was going on?)

Then came the rumors. Kakashi was acting strange so obviously any shinobi worth their salt noticed it. The way coughs followed him wherever he went. The way he refused to acknowledge it and grew ever more evasive.

When Shisui came up to him to needle about the rumors, Obito knew that it was reaching its peak. Because, c'mon, Shisui? Uchiha 'I am the backbone of gossip society, housewives love me, shinobi hate me' Shisui? Carrying along Uchiha 'I am an unwilling accomplice to Uchiha Shisui and his menace ways, but I am still an accomplice' Itachi.

Kakashi was so fucking screwed.

Obito had to gently (read: with threats of exposing how exactly Sasuke learned the word 'fuck') dissuade Shisui from blowing up the rumors to new heights.

The last time Shisui was this invested, Obito had heard that the Raikage himself sent Minato a letter asking if Orochimaru had really defected out of his love triangle for his fellow Sannin. And if there would be more news the Raikage should know about, nudge nudge, wink wink (read: if there was a *sequel rumor*).

Minato had looked so perturbed and just *no* that Obito couldn't help but feel bad for the man and heavily reconsider taking up the hat himself.

Again, Kakashi was so fucking screwed and *still* refusing to say jackshit to his team.

The rumors finally reached its breaking point, because, at this point, it was inevitable.

Someone said that maybe Kakashi was dying due to love.

The trigger was set off and Obito couldn't stop *thinking*.

It didn't help that Kakashi set out with a vengeance to prove them

wrong either. Taking on so many A and S-ranks to prove that he was still capable and definitely not dying due to love. It made Team Minato frazzled. Sometimes worried that Kakashi wasn't going to make it back.

Even worse was the man's steady refusal to go to the hospital. Instead nabbing a random shinobi that could heal the shallowest of wounds from the streets and deciding that it was good enough. Kakashi had assured them that he didn't need Rin to waste her time and chakra over him. His stance defensive and ready to bolt if they pushed the issue.

Obito had to comfort Rin afterwards (damn you, Kakashi) as she grew even more worried for her suddenly distant teammate. Kakashi normally only trusted his healing in Rin's care. And to not even allow her to touch him meant that he was either regressing back into his shell or something was *wrong*.

"He's going to do something worse if I don't give him this," Minato had said. Defensive and hunched shoulders and worry etched into his face.

Obito remembered a time when he thought that Minato was the wisest shinobi, the most rational. But in hindsight, the man was terrible with Kakashi. Not quite sure how to deal with a trauma ridden kid and indulged him on his self sabotaging quest since Kakashi really would do something worse if Minato didn't. And now that trauma ridden kid became a terribly adjusted adult who knew precisely how to push Minato's buttons to get the S-rank missions just so he could disprove the rumors whirling around him.

"He's already doing worse," Kushina said, pointed and angry.

"He could be doing worse yet," Minato pointed out. "Like picking fights with S-rank missing nins."

Kushina begrudgingly gave him that one and so did Obito. But that didn't absolve the man of the absolute wimp he was for indulging Kakashi.

Then a new rumor came. About a past mission. About how Kakashi hated shinobi who were dying due to love. How he was unkind and unsympathetic.

Obito wanted to punch whoever started that rumor.

Kakashi hadn't hated them while he was young. Looked down on them, certainly, but never hated them.

(And Kakashi wasn't unkind by nature, they made him that way. Pushed Sakumo to the brink and left Kakashi to pick up the pieces and scrub out the blood.

When you let a child witness that, is there any other choice than to be unkind? When being kind was what got his father death and condemnation even after he passed?

And now, even after the war is over, when hardly anyone remembers Sakumo kindly, they turn and call Kakashi unkind for a mission long past?)

The mission they kept going on about. Where Kakashi had derided the shinobi for being unable to look after his back. Obito had remembered that. Like some old forgotten memory that hadn't quite been buried in the sand.

"How could you say that about Saori," Obito shouted. Huffing and puffing and angry that Inazuka had somehow gotten a temporary suspension from shinobi duties due to Kakashi's report.

"He's a burden, Obito, not that I expect you to understand," Kakashi derided. His back ramrod straight and Obito saw red. He punched Kakashi for that one. Planted one right on his stupid face.

It spoke a lot about that mission that Kakashi didn't dodge and only braced for impact.

"Are you done throwing your tantrum now?" Kakashi spat. "Or are you going to continue acting like a *child.*"

Obito made a sound. One that was angry and mad and everything in between. "Better a child than an unfeeling asshole like you."

Kakashi, always one to know where to hit where it hurts. Had stared at Obito in disain. Like he hadn't in a long time. Since Kanabi and since Rin.

"One of us has to be a good shinobi around here," Kakashi said. The words burnt more than fire. They both knew exactly what Obito's relationship to the Uchiha clan was like. And it was a low blow. One that left Obito almost breathless and pained.

“Fuck you,” Obito spat back. It wasn’t nearly as angry as he wanted it to be. He reared back, just as determined to hurt Kakashi as Kakashi had hurt him. "And here I thought you were actually getting *nicer."* Kakashi was trying. They all knew that. But right now, Obito felt that Kakashi wasn’t trying enough. Or maybe he didn’t want to try being nice to Obito at all.

They didn’t speak to each other for a long time after that. And when they did, Kakashi pretended that the conversation never happened. His visible eye crinkled in that new way of his. Obnoxious and unreadable.

By that time, Obito didn’t know why he was angry for Saori at all. Or why they had argued. Maybe it had something to do with the way Kakashi was still so abrasive, or the way he had derided Saori that reminded Obito of how Kakashi had once derided *him.*

In the end, it didn’t matter since they didn’t speak of it again.

Kakashi was always good at that, Obito realized now. Good at pushing people away until it was over. Wait for it to blow over and continue on as though it didn’t happen. Pretending that wounds and words didn’t fester.

Only gotten better at it over the years. Less snippy and more *My, you’re awfully worked up about this.*

Kakashi avoided confrontation about his outburst like the plague. And he’d gotten better at not having outbursts at all. A sign of maturity, or of him repressing things further.

Sometimes, Obito wished that Kakashi acted like he was young again. Harsh words and harsher scowls because then he’d at least know that Kakashi was angry and in pain and that they could fix this, all of them.

They were getting better before this whole cough went about, they were making progress on Kakashi’s terrible outlook on confrontation and arguments. Kakashi was starting to actually stick around after arguments instead of taking nonstop missions for a week.

And then the cough came and Kakashi shut down again. Going back to stupid deflections and blaise replies. Avoiding emotional talks like it burnt and Obito couldn’t help but wonder where it went wrong.

There comes a point where Obito's patience breaks.

"What's going on?" Obito asked. Walking down the street with Kakashi back to team dinner. Breaking the tentative peace that had developed between them with the grace of a bull in a china shop.

"With what?" Kakashi replied. He seemed faintly amused, the lazy jounin that everybody knew he was. His stance was relaxed and there was dirt on his ankles and gloves. Obito can see the barest hint of dried blood beneath his fingers. A scrape from a stray kunai, maybe. Not that Kakashi would say it. Kakashi would rather stay home and stitch up a gaping wound than go to the hospital.

Obito hated it.

With this, with your cough, your stupid smile, you clamming back up-

"You," Obito said. "Just you." They locked eyes. A tense moment passed between the both of them. Barely any noise at all other than the rhythmic tapping of their foot against the street. Konoha was silent at night. As though it were holding its breath for Kakashi's reply.

Kakashi paused for a moment. As if unsure whether to answer the truth or think of some bullshit excuse. Obito can practically hear Kakashi's genius brain turning to make up a sorry reason. A clear dismissal and Obito wouldn't be able to bring up the topic again because that would be Kakashi's warning before leaving Obito to his usual haunts, away from Team Minato.

"Kakashi, *please.*" Obito breathed the last part out quietly. The strain of worry collapsed under his feet as he scowled. "Everyone's worried about you."

I'm worried about you.

Kakashi grimaced. Clearly not expecting an emotional attack from Obito.

To be fair, Obito and Kakashi didn't have that many heart to heart conversations. They didn't like using words with one another. Not ones that were meant for comfort. Kakashi sucked at those, and Obito also sucked at using them towards Kakashi. They distracted each other through annoyance or fights from the dark thoughts that were ailing their minds. Grounding each other to the unreal reality that they lived in and that it'll be okay, at the end of the day. And that they were

here and no longer at Kanabi. No longer in the rain where Kiri nin surrounded them.

It was a good system. Until now, when Kakashi's cough couldn't be distracted away. When it hung on the man's frame like some vengeful spirit. Making him haggard and ill.

"It's just," Kakashi began, his throat hoarse, Obito noted. "It'll be over one day, don't worry."

That sounded ominous. The kind of talk that make Obito feel like this was going to be one of Kakashi's last words to him which-

"At least go to the hospital?"

Kakashi hummed noncommittally. "I will, one day." One day could mean anything from tomorrow to the day Kakashi was on the verge of death, but it was the best Obito could get from Kakashi.

"Promise?" Obito felt like a child. Like Sasuke begging for Itachi to not go and train with him instead.

Kakashi's singular visible eye crinkled with quiet amusement. "Promise." And as if to gut punch Obito, Kakashi hooked their pinky fingers together. His finger was warm and his gloved hand briefly grazed Obito's. Their finger slotted together.

Obito let out a strangled sound, unable to say anything anymore because *that just wasn't fair, Kakashi.*

He partly wanted to lock hands with Kakashi, to hold onto something and make things alright again. Make sure that Kakashi can't leave, holding onto Kakashi until he tells them what was wrong so they can fix it. It was illogical, but Obito wanted to. He knew that Kakashi would rebuff him, though, so he didn't.

Later, when Kakashi moved his finger away, he pulled out a notebook. Trotting something or another down with a quiet smile on his face.

Obito liked that look on him. The quiet and soft type. It fits Kakashi.

Any smile fits Kakashi, Obito thought, making him feel airy and light in all the right ways.

Kakashi's next quirk developed soon enough.

It began with innocuous questions like, “what present did we get each other last year?” and quickly devolved into weird obscure questions like, “what did you say to me on the fourteenth of May when I was five, Minato-sensei.” Which left their teacher scrambling through various files to find out that Kakashi and Minato had been on a mission that day and Minato had said something along the lines of Kakashi never being able to summon his ninken to hunt down Tora again.

Kakashi would listen with rapt attention. They all noticed him trotting it down in a colored notebook.

“What, I thought you were a genius, Kakashi,” Obito had said jokingly. But he also wanted to know more about what the fuck was going on with his most elusive teammate. Kakashi had posed the question of what did Rin and Obito made for him for lunch on that one day when he was eight- which, who the fuck would remember?

“Obito,” Rin admonished, bumping her fist against his arm gently (it was definitely gentle since he’d seen Rin break rocks with that thing.) Though she didn’t stop his line of questioning, which was good.

“Hmm, well,” Kakashi seemed to think for a moment. “I’m an old man now.” Kakashi pointed to his hair. “See?”

That answered absolutely fucking nothing, Obito and Rin communicated with their eyes. Kushina groaned fondly and Minato let out a small laugh from the kitchen.

At least it was better than the cough, they all thought. So they indulged him. Even if Minato had asked him on several occasions if his memory was failing.

It was easier to ignore the cough like this. Pretend that Kakashi wasn’t being difficult.

It was a habit that came eerily easy to them. To just move along with the force that was Kakashi and his will to be as stubborn as possible.

A flash jolted Obito awake. Finding Kakashi looking down sheepishly at him.

“Kakashi, no,” Obito said firmly. Finding that it wasn’t nearly as admonishing with him being ready to go the fuck back to sleep. “You cannot add a picture of me sleeping to your scrapbook collection.”

Welcome to Kakashi's newest hobby. Taking pictures of everything and anything mundane in his life with the brightest light known to mankind.

"You mean the picture of you drooling," Kakashi corrected, settling the camera down. In what was an evolution of Kakashi's note taking habits. Obito much preferred the sound of the quiet scribble to the blinding light of Kakashi's expensive new camera. But Kushina got so soppy when Kakashi brought up the camera and there was no way Obito would be able to discreetly get rid of it.

"Naruto's going to see this in ten years and he's going to *laugh,*" Obito said. Feeling more despair than what was probably normal at the *light of the fucking sun* from that goddamn flash. "I'm going to be the laughing stock of Naruto's team."

"Good," Kakashi said. Amusement thick in his voice as he brushed his hand through Obito's hair. Obito making a sound of absolute despair. "It's good to disillusion him." For a man with only one eye visible, Kakashi was surprisingly good at emoting. And the way his singular eye crinkled with quiet fondness made something in Obito's chest itch and his lips curled into a pleased smile. Kakashi doesn't do that for anyone else outside their team. Obito took more than polite joy in that. That this was something only he and Team Minato was allowed to see.

Obito makes a greatly offended sound, or what he hoped it was before he pulled Kakashi down with him onto the couch. Kakashi made a choking sound. A cough escaped the man as Obito relaxed his hold on Kakashi's waist.

Kakashi needed to relax, anyway. With the workaholic that he became during the thick of the rumors.

Kakashi coughed again. It shook his frame.

"Hey, hey," Obito said, peering down at Kakashi, limbs tangled together and all and seeing the burst of emotions behind Kakashi's eye yet unable to tell what emotions at all. Kakashi's hair was slightly ruffled and his expression was intense. Staring at Obito with *something* and Obito's throat went dry.

"You," Kakashi said, almost *something.* Kakashi blinked and then it was no more, hidden behind a veil of fondness. "That's insubordination, no take backs."

The spell was broken and Obito laughed, sleepy and tired. Enjoying how Kakashi loosened up beneath him.

Later, Kakashi's cough awoke Obito, even if Kakashi had tried to muffle it. Obito drew his arms tighter around Kakashi like that could somehow protect his teammate.

It didn't. Somehow it made it worse and Obito tasted iron on his tongue as he bit down hard enough on his inner cheek to bleed.

Maybe, just maybe, Kakashi was getting better through photography of all things. Holding the camera alone was enough to make the man relax. As though some unknown burden was lifted off his shoulders and the camera held the solution to the question of life.

He grew more lax, crawling out of his shell somewhat as he spent more time with Team Minato. Snapping away at them and making Naruto laugh with the bright light.

"You'll see these pictures one day," Kakashi had promised, looking down at the screen of the camera with a fond smile. Having snapped a shot of Rin attempting to style Naruto's hair.

"We'll be looking forward to it," Obito said. Wondering what he looked like through Kakashi's eyes. What Kakashi saw through his camera lens and what he chose to take a picture of. To memorialize for forever and then some. It was a strangely sweet thought, for their emotionally stunted teammate to make a scrapbook down the road for them all to look back on years later. "It better not be all pictures of me drooling."

Kakashi laughed, a fleeting joy that did things to Obito's chest and made him feel like air. "Or tripping. Or making a fool of myself."

"Mhm, well, I can't promise that," Kakashi replied, mirth evident. Then he snapped a picture of Obito's outraged face.

Forget sweet, Kakashi was still a menace.

Their menace.

Then things went wrong. After the rumors were somewhat dispelled, Kakashi took drastically fewer A-ranks. But, of course, it was just Kakashi's luck to run into Sasori of all the S-rank missing nin in what

was supposed to be a vacation mission. Sasori, the one that had his parents killed by Kakashi's father.

Personal grudges; those tended to get ugly and fast. Of course Kakashi had let himself stay behind as bait, while sending Genma and Iroha away. Knowing that the missing nin won't pass up on the chance.

Minato didn't even need to say anything to Obito before Obito was off in Kamui. Warping himself to Kakashi's side.

It was always easy to find Kakashi. Their Sharingan linked them together. Like some sort of frayed string.

(Obito found that he liked that. That he was somehow linked to Kakashi in a way that no one else ever would be. Even if Kakashi was elusive, Obito could always find him, and that was something Obito took pride in.)

Obito's heart almost stuttered to a stop when he saw Kakashi lean back against a tree. His breathing was shallow and his body wracked by coughs. Kakashi had enough experience to wrap up the bleeding injuries. But apparently poison wasn't off the list for Sasori's arsenal, judging by the way Kakashi had no other fatal injuries in sight.

Rin and Obito will murder Sasori, this is a promise.

"Kakashi, can you hear me?" Obito found his arms beneath Kakashi's back and knees once more. Much more frantic than last time. Only hearing Kakashi's cough and cough and cough. The sound of it echoing eerily in the Kamui dimension, ricocheting into his ears. Kakashi gave no answers.

"Rin!" Obito called urgently, scaring those around him as he appeared in the hospital. Luckily, getting no attacks from trigger happy shinobi. Trying his best to relax his grip on Kakashi. The man was already wheezing and weak as is. Obito felt, for a moment, that Kakashi could shatter if touched wrong. Obito could detect the familiar, terrible smell of blood, mixed with something else- something sweet. The poison perhaps.

It was a testament to Rin's professionalism that she still exuded a calm demeanor. Barking out orders for the other medic nin and nurses around her while Obito stood there in silent panic. Half wanting to claw Kakashi back when they took him from his arms.

Rin came out of the room paler than she'd last been in it. It was the kind of haunted look that usually meant-

"Kakashi- is he-" Obito couldn't quite get the last word out. Couldn't imagine Kakashi like *that.*

"No, no, Kakashi's still alive," Rin placated him quickly. Her expression still rattled and Obito wasn't reassured in the slightest.

"What is it then?"

"There's," Rin hesitated for a moment, then glanced at Obito, then back to the room where Kakashi laid. "There's flowers."

Obito felt his heart catch in his throat. Like he was underwater yet *not.*

"He- he's-"

"He already found a doctor," Rin said quietly. Her eyes growing misty. Her hair, still tied up, somewhat in disarray and her expression was so, so tired.

Obito thought it'd be something fixable, that there was a cure for whatever cough Kakashi was going through. That Kakashi should just pop into the hospital and be alright again.

Kakashi always came out on top of whatever happened. Always with a disarming smile and a crooning, *You were worried? How sweet.*

"Rin." Obito sounded pathetic, even to his own ears.

Rin's expression pinched together. "He'll be fine after the surgery, Obito."

Obito didn't know who that was meant to reassure. He didn't even know why Rin was saying that in the first place when they both knew it was a lie.

"Physically," Obito agreed quietly. "But our Kakashi will be gone." *Dead.* He doesn't say because he doesn't want to be cruel, and he doesn't want to accept the gravity of reality yet.

Because Obito knows Kakashi, knows at least this much. Knows that Kakashi loves with all he has and then some. Even if he doesn't show it. It's in the way he looked at them. Like he would burn the world to the ground if they asked, and Obito doesn't doubt that he would. It's

in the way he would always hunch over, lanky figure and all, and smile like a predator when there was danger afoot for his comrades. The way he'd kill, lacking his usual grace and making up for it in brutality when it came to Team Minato, bathed in blood and gore and something so morbidly beautiful by the end of it all. Topped with a teasing but genuine *You two are a handful, aren't you?* which would make Rin laugh and reach towards Kakashi to heal him while Obito balked at the insult.

Kakashi was that type of lover. The type that was scarily loyal and devoted and would bring nations down to your heel if only you'd ask.

(Something in the Hatake blood, he recknoned. Loyalty and devotion in their blood just as love was in the Uchiha's.)

Those types all end up becoming ghosts in their own skin after the surgery.

Rin hugged him, burying her face into his shoulder and he pretended he didn't feel the tremors wracking at her body even as his shoulder stayed dry.

Sitting by Kakashi's bedside was something uncommon but not rare. Yet Obito has never felt so wrong before. Like the world was crashing down and that this was *it.*

That Kakashi might be gone for forever and Obito could never reach him again. Couldn't call Kakashi's name and see the man looking back with his singular coal eye anymore, with that familiar, teasing, *Obito* on the tip of his tongue.

We could fix this, Obito thinks, desperately clawing for something to anchor himself. Clutching onto Kakashi's hand. *We just need to find out who Kakashi loves.*

When Kakashi woke up, Obito was right there by his bedside. Reminding him of a day long past, where Obito was the one that laid asleep and Kakashi was the one fretting.

The man blinked, taking in his surroundings before he relaxed minutely. Then turning his attention to Obito, his eyes crinkled in a motion that now only infuriated Obito.

Obito wondered if that's the only smile he'll get from Kakashi again,

after this all plays out like Kakashi had wanted it to.

Obito likes all of Kakashi's smiles, even this one on occasions. Where it was teasing and sly. But not like this, never like this. When it was insincere and not teasing in the slightest and was just fake and wrong. Obito couldn't bear to see it, not when it might be the only smile Kakashi would be able to offer him after.

"Obito," Kakashi greeted. His voice scratchy and still light. As though he didn't get the gravity of the situation. As though he could play it off like it doesn't exist.

Obito won't let him. They indulged Kakashi and looked at what happened. Kakashi went off the bender completely and now has flowers in his lungs and they were never even supposed to find out.

It hurt to know that Kakashi never wanted them to know. That he had wanted life to resume when he'd be gone in all the ways that mattered.

"Kakashi," Obito gritted out. *You fool, you idiot, you-* "When were you going to tell us that you have flowers in your lungs?"

Chapter End Notes

i really enjoyed writing obito's pov haha, so this is probably one of my longest updates for a fic because i just love writing it so i hope y'all enjoyed it!!

leave a comment on your thoughts and anything else if you feel like it!! I really enjoy reading them and they give me lotsa motivation <3

hospital conversations are a last resort (don't show anything)

Chapter Summary

converstations are had and kakashi thinks that everyone should stop overreacting already

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kakashi didn't know what to say. If there was anything he could say that would take off the edge of hurt from Obito's voice.

Kakashi wasn't good at comforting with words rather than action. And he knows that his answer will bring nothing but anger if he said it.

Never, he thought.

Obito seemed to read his thoughts and was all the more pained for it and Kakashi wanted to lie. To say something reassuring, but he knew if Obito saw the lie for what it was he'd be even worse off for it.

"I thought we were a *team,*" Obito said. On the edge of something.

"We are," Kakashi agreed easily. They'd been a team for longer than half his life now.

"Team share things, Kakashi, I don't know if you notice," Obito said dryly.

"I do share things," Kakashi argued and continued as he saw Obito's eye flared in challenge. "But isn't this a bit personal? I didn't take you for a gossip. What would Shisui say, hmm?" The words were spoken just right. The right kind of drawl and teasing and *my, so worried about me, how cute.*

There was a brief moment of silence, Kakashi's glancing up to Obito's face and oh-

"You're dying, Kakashi!" Obito spat, his voice was raspy and loud. "And you were never going to tell us!"

"I'm not going to die, Obito," Kakashi stated calmly. Finding it hard to

breathe in the face of Obito's burgeoning anger. They haven't had a spat in a while, Kakashi should've known it would happen now, of all times. Like clockwork, once Team 7's luck strikes, it strikes badly.

"I'll get the surgery so I won't die," Kakashi reassured, his hand grazing Obito's shoulder before dropping again. "I haven't used the Sharingan to record anything either, so I'll be fine mentally, too. Though, I'd like some help with memory, and things. Sage knows how much Naruto would cry if-"

"Stop this, Kakashi!" Obito's voice rose even higher. Angered by Kakashi's words.

Of course, Kakashi wasn't good with words that could comfort. Never was, never will be. More likely to anger someone to death than he would bring them joy.

Especially when it comes to Obito.

"You're dying! You're going to leave us and you're not going to be the same ever again!" Obito's voice rang loudly in the quiet hospital room as he grabbed onto Kakashi's hand. Kakashi hoped that the silencing seals were strong enough lest there be nurses coming soon in the future. "You're going to be gone and you're not going to remember shit because that's the kind of guy you are and you weren't even going to tell us! You're going to go off like you always do and you're not even going to say shit."

"I'll still be Hatake Kakashi," Kakashi argued. His hand slowly being crushed by Obito's. He never wanted to hold Obito's hand like this, but it'd do, too. Obito's hand was rough and calloused, of course-

"That's not the point!"

"Then what is?"

Kakashi would still be Kakashi just missing a few memories. That was all. Memories and his heart.

But shinobi didn't need that to live. Team Minato didn't need that for him to continue to protect them.

The silence stretched on, and the more it did the more Kakashi was convinced that he was *right*.

He didn't feel like it, though. Not when Obito suddenly looked so

drained and tired. The anger was gone and left behind nothing at all. The bags under his eye made him more worn than his clothes, which were rumpled and dirtied by stains that smelled like stale hospital food and juice. Crumbs on his vest and his hair a mess.

"You don't get it," Obito said, something almost like heartbreak in his face and Kakashi had put it there.

This wasn't what Kakashi wanted.

This wasn't what neither of them wanted, it seemed.

"You're not going to get that surgery," Obito continued, his hands cradling Kakashi's in a deathgrip.

"Excuse me?"

"I'm- we're going to find out who you love and make them fall in love with you," Obito promised. Locking his eye with Kakashi's, not understanding the gravity of his own words. "And they'll love you, they will."

Kakashi's breath caught in his throat. Those three cursed words almost slipped out, unbidden and driven by nothing but foolish wants and delusions. Of Obito looking at him like this, of saying it with such surety that *Kakashi's love will be reciprocated.* The sky was blue, grass was green, Kakashi's love will be reciprocated.

Kakashi didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

"That's- *you can't do that,*" Kakashi argued. Wanting Obito to let go of whatever this was. Let go of this promise so that it won't hurt them both when it falls through because it will. It'll burn them both but only Kakashi will have the luxury of forgetting.

Obito smiled, all victory and smug and charming and kissable. "Oh, *I will.*"

Minato and Kushina were, of course, informed of Kakashi's little hospital visit and subsequent flowers.

There were a lot of tears shed and a lot of shouting commencing in Kakashi's supposed peaceful resting place. Kushina did most of the shouting, her vocal chords were the stuff of legends.

Rin stared at him in disappointment through it all, her eyes rimmed

red and her voice hoarse (also from screaming at him).

“Kakashi you- you know you can trust me, right?” Minato asked. Probably having escaped his duties via dubious means. “I- why didn’t you tell us?”

“Because he’s Kakashi,” Rin answered, still staring at him with anger and sadness. “And Kakashi thinks talking about things is too *hard*.”

Ouch.

So proceeded the next few hours, stopping only when ANBU came to fetch their Hokage and Kushina came in to replace him instead. Joy.

Kakashi was apparently bedbound, now. No escape attempts allowed or missions until he fessed up.

Fess up in this case being who the person of his dreams was. Minato had promised with manic eyes that whoever it was, Minato would fetch them for Kakashi in record time.

Kakashi did not doubt this.

Sage knows how many Hiraishin seals Minato slapped on around the village.

Minato had also promised (too cheerfully) that even if they were from another village it, “wouldn’t be a big deal, thirty seconds, tops.”

Kakashi did not doubt this either.

Kakashi is appropriately horrified over the possible ramifications of *war*.

Kakashi had zipped his mouth at that point and refused to even speak anyone’s name. They’ll thank him later when they aren’t dragged kicking and screaming into Kakashi’s room by the Yondaime.

Kushina had called it “a moment of terrible regression, thanks, honey” which left Minato devastated.

Rin was more subtle in her information gathering, discreetly mentioning shinobi names around Kakashi and waiting for any reactions.

She was a smart and perceptive kunoichi.

Kakashi will be the sneakiest.

When Obito's name inevitably came up, Kakashi didn't cough. Instead he swallowed down the flower; blooming and lively and slick with blood.

Obito drove a wooden stake through Kakashi's room to pin a conspiracy board of who Kakashi is in love with.

Obito, as it turns out, is neither a manic nor subtle information gatherer.

Rather, he was in a league of his own.

Kakashi thinks he fell even more in love with Obito at that moment. Seeing the messy scrawl of Obito's handwriting written on notes that were pinned none too gently on pictures of familiar shinobi. Colored strings connecting pictures and notes. Uncomplimentary doodles drawn next to some shinobi and unsavory words next to others. Clearly Obito had spared no effort in ripping out pages of the bingo book to use and proceeding to very carefully observe his chosen targets. Who knew he had it in him? Team Minato certainly did, but not many others. Obito's potential for stalking was, indeed, very strong (Kakashi had seen that board of Rin pictures Obito had when they were kids) and clearly it had found its use. If Obito really applied himself he could be a spymaster. But no, Obito didn't need to do anything but be Obito.

It was creepily endearing, to Kakashi at least.

When Kakashi had coughed, Obito had taken it as a sign that it was clearly someone on the board.

"I told you I'd figure it out!" Obito had proclaimed, suddenly so alive and bright. A grin stretched on his lips, victory seemingly at his fingertips and Kakashi just couldn't take this away from him.

Obito can never know who Kakashi loves. But Kakashi can't just trample on his efforts like this, even when Obito's picture was not on the board.

So instead he had sighed, pretended to be caught instead of endeared and foolishly and irrevocably in love with a fool.

Obito can never know. If he did, he couldn't love Kakashi back like he'd promised. It'd break him- he'd think himself the cause for Kakashi's surgery and everything after. He'd blame himself for being unable to love Kakashi back when it was Kakashi who wanted to delay it until the last moment so that he could love Obito, selfishly, shamelessly.

Kakashi can't do that to Obito, can't burden him with feelings he can't ever return and weigh him down for the rest of his life.

"Fine, I see them," Kakashi confirmed, looking right at Obito. And for that moment- just for that sentence, he admitted it.

Just for that moment, he felt like he'd confess.

He said it, to the room, to the world, to *Obito.* It was exhilarating. The words ready to be said and yet never will but at this moment Kakashi had gotten the closest he might ever get to saying them. He stared at Obito and there were a thousand and one words he wanted to say but never can but, oh, he wanted.

It was there, ready to be used and said and Kakashi could so easily do so. For a brief moment- just a second- Kakashi wanted to say it and imagined a future where he said it and Obito looked back at him. And then Obito would-

He watched on fondly as Obito cheered, loud and rambunctious and utterly lovable.

It was wrong to pretend that this was Obito's reaction to his unsaid confession.

But Kakashi wasn't a good man.

The days spent in the hospital were idle enough that Kakashi began to wonder what his own flowers were. Yellow petals and all.

He asked a nurse and she said she'll get back to him. Her eyes full of pity and her voice wavering at the end, a shaky smile. He felt mildly annoyed that here he was, one of Konoha's greats, being pitied. But then again, being pitied got answered, so he did not say anything more.

The next day, he got his answer.

It left him smiling all day.

Kakashi had ordered Yamato to go and fetch him the photographs hidden under his bed. He knew Yamato wouldn't question him like Team Minato would.

Kakashi steadied his hand, and prepared for a day of writing.

It was a cloudy day, Kakashi wished he could be outside and maybe smell whether rain or storm was ahead.

Instead, he was here. Alone. Minato had the village, Kushina had the sealing corps, and Rin had the hospital.

Obito was on a mission.

It was a good day to write, Kakashi decided, and so he waited.

Kakashi felt like he was writing his own funeral. Slotting the pictures that he'd taken in their rightful place within the notebooks. Writing descriptions down for his future self to understand. Drawing arrows connecting the names to the person. Trotting down each painfully long description for each and feeling the finality of it all dawning on him slowly.

Treat Rin kindly, or else she'll break your face. Kakashi scribbled the words next to Rin punching through a tree. That should be enough context. *She's the best teammate we could've gotten, so don't take that for granted.*

If Naruto cries because of you, escape the village for a month and don't look back. Naruto's birthday picture goes here, the boy smiling widely into the camera. His birthday cake before him. *Really, everyone will hunt you down.*

Tell Kushina that her hair is lovely for me, remember to keep up on your sealing lessons or else she'll mock you for the rest of your life. Of course, Kushina in her traditional Uzumaki robes. Standing grand and tall with Naruto on her shoulders. The pampered little prince.

Minato likes sealing books. Get him some if you ever go out of the village. It works as a bribe, too. A picture of Minato slumped over his paperwork. He hides an amused smile as he spots the signature seal doodles in the corner of the man's paperwork. *Although, you never need*

to bribe him, he's a bit of a softy.

Kakashi coughed at Obito's. Wondering what he could possibly say at all to the situation he's found himself in. Looking at Obito's pictures spread out around the notebook.

There was too much to say. So much to say for one single notebook and one single pen and one single man to list it all.

Pages and pages of regrets and wishes and what-ifs. Falling in love with Obito wasn't a single point in time but a cataclysm of events.

He could say many things, *Obito tends to worry even if he pretends to be cool and hip, indulge him for me. Obito's smiles are a bit lopsided when he lies but you love that anyways, don't tell him how you know. Obito's a crybaby even if he denies it and you think that's cute, don't forget to give him your handkerchief when he does. Obito makes flowers with his Mokuton sometimes, they're pretty and sometimes deadly but you'll love them anyways. Obito sometimes gets into one of his moods, and they're not pretty, but you'll stick around anyways because you're Kakashi.*

He had written so much for Team Minato. Who they are, their history, what he, himself, was to them as they were to him.

But with Obito, he was at an impasse. Future Kakashi would read through their history and remember, but he'll never know Obito's quirks and habits.

He didn't need to.

There was finally an end point to the storm, and just like the flash of lightning it should be short and true.

If there was one thing Kakashi wanted his future self to know, then it'd be:

This is Obito, you're not allowed to love him.

The words made him laugh. Weak and gasping.

This'd be their little inside joke, he decided; between him and the future him. The ending should be happy. It was the kind of thing that'd make his future self annoyed and wondering about his past self's sanity- but, it was the kind of thing that Obito would love if he could see it (he won't see it, never will. Kakashi thinks he can predict his future self's actions and letting Obito peek into this journal of theirs is

a touch too private for a stranger). A final joke, a cheerful end.

Because Kakashi didn't regret it. Didn't want to leave behind sad words or what-ifs or regrets. Because there was none.

So there was no need to be sad at the end.

He traced the words gently, traced the edges of Obito's face in the photograph. It was a picture of Obito smiling lopsidedly next to a curious Naruto, meaningless to future Kakashi, but infinitely endearing to Kakashi in the present. The rest of the photographs, the one with Obito's genuine smiles and grins and scowls, will go to Team Minato. Into a scrapbook that future Kakashi will one day look at and feel nothing at all.

He coughed and coughed, seeing the yellow spread out in his hand.

He'd finally learn their meaning, now.

Coreopsis; always cheerful. How Obito-like, Kakashi had thought, and was all the more in love with it.

It was a quiet day, Minato had popped in and had just sat there. No questions or prodding.

It was calm, peaceful.

"I never wanted you to understand," Minato had said suddenly.

Kakashi's eye moved to meet Minato's. Remembering a campfire from so long ago. Genius to genius. Teacher to student. A man who didn't know how to deal with a trauma ridden child and a trauma ridden child too gone to open up.

"I know," Kakashi replied. "If you had your way, I wouldn't understand anything at all."

Minato smiled, sad and waned. "Being ignorant is good, sometimes."

"It makes things hurt less," Kakashi agreed.

Minato nodded, his face still etched in sorrow.

"The pictures, they're not just for the scrapbook," Minato said suddenly, his eyes sharp and Kakashi knows the man he is seeing is the Yellow Flash.

“Not all, no,” Kakashi admitted, never being able to lie to Minato when he was like this. Intense and just as sharp as his kunai.

Minato sighed, sounding so sad that Kakashi wanted to hug him and say that no, it wasn’t that bad, as bad as everybody thought it was.

“I never wanted you to understand.” Minato sounded pained, like it was his own fault that Kakashi was the way he was. “But now you *do*.”

It never was Minato’s fault. Konoha’s and the Sandaime’s and everything in between alongside the war, never Minato’s.

“I’d stab myself if I were here,” Kakashi said suddenly. “For being a bad shinobi.”

“Kakashi,” Minato chided, ready to speak in defense of the current him.

“I’m not a good shinobi for falling in love,” Kakashi continued. “Rule twenty-five, remember, sensei?” Minato opened his mouth and Kakashi cut him off again. “But I think, now, I’m fine with that. I think I understand now why that shinobi didn’t go through with it, even during war. I think it’s worth it, this, this whole thing.”

Minato was silent, his eyes tired and his posture defeated.

“Don’t fire me afterwards, sensei, for breaking the rule,” Kakashi teased and reached out to hug Minato.

Minato hugged him back.

He never asked who Kakashi loved again.

That night, Kakashi dreamed again.

His younger self stared up at him, his expression indecipherable. “Shinobi rule twenty-five is important.”

“It’s broken,” he said. “Broken and gone and grinded to dust.”

His younger self stared up at him for a moment. Kakashi couldn’t quite remember his expression now, but he thinks it was something like a smile.

“Yeah, you broke it, what a Bakashi.”

Kakashi laughed.

“I’ve been hearing what the flowers are,” Rin said one day.

“Oh?” Kakashi balanced the kunai atop each other. “That’s old news.”

Rin smiled at him, it wasn’t the bright smiles she had, but it was something. A proof that they could move forward, even after the surgery. Kakashi was sure of it.

“Always cheerful,” Rin mused instead, Kakashi being sure to not crack under the pressure. “I wonder who it could be.”

“I wonder, too,” Kakashi replied glibly.

Rin snorted, fond and rough.

“Do you really have no chance with them, Kakashi?”

“What do you think, Rin?”

Back and forth, question for question, Kakashi knows the game and he has played it for longer than Rin has. Being in ANBU does that.

“I think that you have a chance.”

Kakashi raised a brow. “Despite you not knowing who?” Because if she knew who, she’ll know it was impossible.

“Me not knowing who doesn’t matter anymore, I’ve realized,” Rin said.

“Oh?” Kakashi went back to stacking the kunai on top of each other, his new pastime. “Obito seems to think that it’s the key to everything, don’t you know?”

“Because he’s Obito and he only thinks of what’s the simplest answer,” Rin replied. “He doesn’t think that the key is you, Kakashi.”

Kakashi blinked at her.

“You’ve already given up,” Rin said. “Even if Obito brings you the person of your dreams you won’t make a move because it’s already a checkmate from the start.”

“Hmm, and what if that was right,” Kakashi replied, owing her at least

this much. Trying to not look at her and let it slip. Not let the flower slip out at Obito's name. "What then?"

"I just want to know why," Rin answered. Gazing down at him with sad, sad eyes.

Kakashi glanced up at her, singular eye looking at the way she was so grim and gloom.

He thinks she deserves at least this much. To know why. To lessen the pang in her heart knowing how hopeless Obito's quest was from the very start. All their quests were, from the very start. Because it doesn't matter how much they search and praise Kakashi to high heavens.

It all didn't matter if Kakashi had already given up. Minato had realized it first, and now Rin had, too.

"From the first moment I looked at him, it was already a loss," Kakashi said, plain and simple. "His heart was already taken, there was no way about it. It was already over before it began."

"You didn't even begin," Rin argued quietly. Her clipboard creaked slightly under her heavy grip.

"I didn't start," Kakashi agreed. "If there was no start, there wouldn't be an abrupt ending. If I tried to start and he rejected me, I'd have to stop loving him. Like this-"

"Like this, you get to love him for however long you can," Rin finished, her voice wavering.

Kakashi smiled, soft and warm and things he can't be anymore, not after. "I'd get to love him for forever." Like a whispered secret, a hidden trick played. A prank pulled successfully but more. He felt proud of that, somehow. That he'd get to love Obito for forever and then some.

Rin takes in a shuttering breath, like an old camera gone out of work.

Kakashi patted the space in the narrow hospital bed. "Come here, Rin."

She sighed, fond and sad and bitter all rolled into one.

She laid beside him, despite it all. They talked about many things. Kakashi complimented Rin on her newest recipes, she laughed it off

shakily. Kakashi described the bodies of water he saw on his missions and how she and the Sanbi would've loved it, Rin made him mark it all on a map, so they could visit it together later. Kakashi described how one of his mission reports lay unfinished on his desk, Rin rolled her eyes fondly and promised she'd finish it for him.

Kakashi said how he'd make time to make dog treats with her, after this, she smiled at him. Sniffles and all and he smiled back.

Obito finally came to him, no board in sight, and Kakashi knew.

"Don't be so gloomy, that's your Uchiha speaking," Kakashi teased.

Obito glanced up at him with one angry eye. "How can you joke in a time like this?"

Kakashi wondered, too, sometimes.

"I just think it's nothing too serious, is all." Kakashi shrugged, getting awfully bored of the drab hospital.

"It is serious," Obito snarled. "Minato-sensei and Rin they- they-"

"They realized that it was fine? That this was how I wanted it to be?" Kakashi finished.

"You're coughing up flowers, Kakashi- this- this isn't anything anyone would want!" Obito shook Kakashi's shoulder as if to awaken him from a dream instead of pulling him into one like he'd done. Make Kakashi think of Obito's warm hands and Obito's singular focus on Kakashi and Kakashi alone.

Kakashi coughed.

"See?" Obito spoke as though vindicated. "You don't want this- you should be loved back, Kakashi, and then you'd be happy and then things would be *right*."

Kakashi clasped Obito's hands.

"I am already happy, Obito. Sensei realized it, and then Rin, and it's your turn to recognize that."

They were tough words to say aloud, when Obito was like this. But Kakashi couldn't let him go on like this. Searching for an answer when there was none. When the answer was that Obito should just go and

comfort Rin already and leave Kakashi so that Kakashi would stop coughing.

“My happiness isn’t dependent on that person loving me back,” Kakashi continued. “I don’t need them to love me back to be happy. I’m happy just being in love with them. They won’t ever love me back, Obito, do you understand that?”

“But how can you be so sure?” Obito grasped back at Kakashi’s hand.

Because you love Rin for longer than I’d ever loved you. Because you made me promise to take care of Rin even as you were dying. Because you came back to defend Rin from me. Because you’d continue to love Rin, after years and years. Because on missions you’d always take Rin’s side, even if in jest. Because Rin’s always better than me in your eyes. Because you don’t argue with Rin like you do me. Because Rin’s always better at cooking than me. Because Rin’s smile makes you smile back while I can barely give a genuine smile on good days. Because I know you gave the Sharingan to me to protect Rin. Because I know you gave the Sharingan to me so that you can see Rin through my eyes. Because you’d rather spend time with Rin after missions than in bars with me. Because Rin’s taste in books is better than mine. Because you hadn’t struggled ever to work with Rin in a team. Because somehow, you haven't confessed to Rin yet, but I know you will.

Because that day, when you woke up, any words I could’ve and should’ve said couldn’t amount to just one from Rin.

Kakashi coughed instead, coughed and coughed and coughed as Obito grew panicked beside him. He felt pathetic, pathetic and small and terrible.

Kakashi wasn’t sure how long it was until his coughs subsided, but when it did, Obito’s eyes had long lost that manic edge. Instead it was desperate and wounded.

“Because,” Kakashi said at last, his voice much hoarser than he’d like. “He loves someone else.”

“We could still-”

“He loved her since the academy, Obito, I can’t measure up to that and I don’t want to,” Kakashi stated.

“How do you know he still loves her?” Obito’s voice was raising in hope and frustration. “It’s been a long time, feelings changed,

Kakashi."

"Obito-"

"People grow and they change- it's- it's like trees-"

"Obito-"

"The academy? What- that's like two decades, Kakashi. You're assuming things and you-"

"Obito-"

"I've matured a whole lot since then and I bet that that person has, too, and- and *feelings can change, Kakashi* you just gotta-"

"What about you?" Kakashi said at last, unable to keep the words from spitting out of his mouth.

Obito stood frozen in front of him, there was something in his gaze- something Kakashi couldn't look into further, wouldn't let himself. Kakashi felt ash on his tongue and guilt in his gut.

"Hypothetically speaking," Kakashi continued, pretending that it wasn't spoken from the heart.

Obito's face then crumbled. Kakashi was reminded that only Kakashi would get the luxury of forgetting this, Obito wouldn't.

"Just forget about it," Kakashi concluded, letting go of Obito's hand.

Obito's tongue was still tied and he said nothing at all. Still staring at Kakashi and his expression was still so, so pained.

"Obito, I-"

Obito vanished with Kamui.

Of course him and Obito were never going to get a proper farewell, they were never quite compatible. Never quite *right* together.

Kushina appeared later on in the day, Kakashi still left feeling on edge and terrible.

"You look miserable," Kushina noted bluntly, making Kakashi's lips raise marginally.

“Obito and I got into a bit of an argument, that’s all.” Obito couldn’t figure it out, not like this. “He’s a bit stubborn.”

“I heard,” Kushina said.

“Oh? Did one of the nurses tell you how Obito made the plants go-”

“No, I was outside.” She gestured to the door.

“Oh.”

“Loved her since the academy, huh,” Kushina mused.

“Lots of childhood loves around here,” Kakashi commented idly.

“Always cheerful,” Kushina continued.

Kakashi glanced up at her, a plea.

But she was merciless. “I should’ve known, you and Obito.”

Chapter End Notes

happy new years!!! hope yall will enjoy this slightly early update haha <3

kakashi is just not getting why everyone is so sad lmao, so dont mind him being blaise.

feel free to leave a comment on your thoughts! I enjoyed reading them and they motivate me lots <3

confessions are overrated (but this is your last chance so do it right, kakashi)

Chapter Summary

Kushina is a smart, smart woman. Her work with sealing was an indicator, though many seem to not see it beneath her boisterous demeanor. But Kakashi knows for a fact that she was just, if not more, intelligent than his teacher.

“Please don’t tell him,” he said. He knows he cannot ask anything of her. Let alone this, but he will try regardless.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kushina is a smart, smart woman. Her work with sealing was an indicator, though many seem to not see it beneath her boisterous demeanor. But Kakashi knows for a fact that she was just, if not more, intelligent than his teacher.

“Please don’t tell him,” he said. He knows he cannot ask anything of her. Let alone this, but he will try regardless.

Obito must surely doubt something, but he cannot know. Kakashi will not let it come to that.

There is a shift in weight. She placed herself right next to him, her body exuding a fierce warm. Her hair the dying embers of a flame.

“I won’t,” she said at last. He felt gratitude bloom in his chest. She didn’t need to promise him this, he knows he has done much wrong. He does not deserve this, but she is kind. “It is not my place to.”

“Thank you.” The words were quiet and hushed, but heartfelt all the same.

“I want to tell you something, though,” she continued, placing her hand right next to his. An invitation. He takes it. He will listen to whatever she says because he owes her at least this. He owes her many more things like not being a social disaster and being a good person, but he cannot do either of those, never was able to. So he will do this, instead. “Did you know Minato’s hair reminds me of

sunflowers?"

Kakashi hummed and hawed. "It is very… yellow." That was an understatement and they both know it. It is yellow in the way Kushina's hair is red, never quite apt enough to describe the vibrancy of both of them.

It is a miracle Naruto's hair is not orange.

She laughed. It is a pretty thing. Like flowers and bells and the early mornings of Konoha where the children played in the sandpit.

It is the laugh of summer.

"It's so *bright*," she said. "I wondered how hair like his was possible."

He looks at her hair. Red enough to bathe the world in the color of the sunset. She slapped his shoulder teasingly and he smiled.

"It's so bright," she continued. "Just like the petals of a sunflower."

He knows he is about to hear a love story. He thinks he has heard this tale many times before. But he will indulge her anyway, because it might be one of the last times he'll get to feel affection.

After this, when he hears this tale, he'll feel nothing at all. And this, too, is something he'll owe Kushina for her silence.

"Sunflowers bloomed for him," she said in breathless wonder. "Inside my chest."

Oh.

This he hasn't heard before. This was not the tales that she had passed on many times before to them all. That she told with hushed giggles and bright cheeks.

Kakashi looked at her, in what might be the last time and he felt his heart breaking. "You- you and him-"

She laughed, the laughter of summer. As though she wasn't relaying the makings of a tragedy.

"He was- is- a genius of his generation," Kushina said, the grin on her lips is breathtaking. "And everybody knew he would become Hokage. Most of all, me. And who was I? I was just a jinchuuriki, I just made seals. I wasn't any special in that department. There is the whole

sealing corps to go around with people like me. The only thing I had special was my legacy. The Uzumaki seals I made were beautiful, but they were a legacy, they weren't *mine.* So who was I to stand next to him?"

"Your seals are wonderful, they are," Kakashi insisted and grabbed onto her hand just as fiercely. "And I'll do away with anyone who says they aren't."

She laughed again, like bells and flowers. "That's a pretty word for murder."

"Call it clean up," Kakashi replied.

She smiled, shifting so that her shoulder touched his.

"I felt that I should just give up, that these flowers were enough," she recounted. "I couldn't wither away because I was the jinchuuriki and I couldn't let them grow precisely because I was the jinchuuriki. So I had to cut the flowers in the bud."

"But you didn't," Kakashi said.

"But I didn't," she grinned mischievously. He would call her a fox, but she'd get angry. "I was so close to giving up, but then I remember something Mito-obaasan told me."

He held his breath and felt as though he were about to hear something that he can never speak about.

"She said that I had given up normalcy in exchange for Konoha's peace, that I'd already given up enough," Kushina said. Her smile is a mix between nostalgia and a blooming flame. "So I get to be selfish, all I want."

He gazed at her, the dying embers of a sun in her hair and the way her lips stretched into a wide grin.

"So I was done giving things up." She stretched one hand above them both and gripped down as though pulling the sun from the sky and Kakashi thought he cannot breathe. "I went and grabbed the genius from Konoha. And you know what?"

She turned her face towards his.

Her smile is the sun itself. "He loves me back."

He does not know what to say.

“I’m saying, I think it’s your turn to be selfish, Kakashi,” Kushina said and her voice could move thousands. “I think you haven’t ever reached for a thing to call yours in your life.”

She clasped his hand and yanked it up. Her eyes telling him to listen and listen well.

“So I think it’s time you try to be selfish for once,” Kushina said. “It’s a once in a lifetime chance.”

And so it was.

He spread out his fingers.

He thinks of many things at that moment. The times when he was young and wanted to grab his father’s vest and tell him to never leave, yet never did it. The times when he was older and wanting Minato’s company as a guardian but never quite good enough to grab his hand so he instead grew irritable and angry. The times when he was younger and saw Obito and Rin and wanted their company and yet not and so he destroyed what little bond they had. The times when he rejects Rin and Obito’s invitation for company because they were a duo and he’d just be the third wheel. The times when he wanted to stay in Minato and Kushina’s house but held back because he had a home of his own, didn’t he?

The times when he wanted to kiss Obito but never could because Obito belonged with Rin, didn’t he?

He finds that he wants, that he has wanted for a long time.

He finds that he has never reached for a single thing in his life.

This is a hell of a time to be selfish, Kakashi thinks.

But it’s a once in a lifetime chance, his last chance to be selfish. His last chance to reach and to grab.

He thinks of his father’s vest, he thinks of Minato’s. He thinks of the space in Team Minato that he can carve for himself, he thinks of the space in Minato and Kushina’s home, just waiting. He thinks of Obito’s lips, he thinks of Obito’s smiles and how easy it’d be to close the gap between them.

Kakashi stares at his hand in the sky, fingers spread. Ready to grasp onto something and yet never has.

“It’s too late,” he finds himself saying. “I don’t think I can.”

“It is the chance of a lifetime,” she says.

This is true, he thinks. His fingers lay waiting for his next move. His hand is outstretched, he does not feel the burn of his muscle.

“If Obito does not love me, this’ll haunt him for the rest of his life,” Kakashi said. And the thought holds him back. He does not want Obito unhappy, he loves Obito. He wants him to be happy.

“He already knows, Kakashi.”

Kakashi blinks and glances at her.

“I don’t think he’s that oblivious, do you?”

Obito is, but Kakashi thinks something in him already knows that the jig is up.

“Yeah,” Kakashi says instead. Because he loves Obito and he knows exactly how smart Obito is. He has played on the fringes of Obito’s obliviousness long enough to know when the line has been crossed. “I’ve messed it up.”

Kushina makes a soft sound, putting her hand below his, supporting the weight of it as the rest of her draws him into an embrace.

This is a mother’s hug, he thinks. And it burns.

“What will haunt him more is an unfinished story,” Kushina said. “He needs something, Kakashi. He looks so hard to find out who you love because he at least wants you to have some closure, Kakashi. And if he knows you love him- he at least will want for the two of you to have an ending.”

Kakashi hasn’t quite thought of it like that before. And the thought scorches him.

What Kakashi feared most is an ending. What Obito needs is precisely that.

The curtains are falling, it’s time for an ending, Kakashi thinks.

This is not being selfish, really, because he is giving the both of them closure. She knows she is giving him this. An excuse to confess. But he knows that she is not just saying this. He knows that she is not just saying for him to confess and move on.

She wants him to reach for the sun. To reach for Obito. To chase him fiercely, for the first and last time. She wants him to be selfish and give chase.

He thinks of his father's vest, Minato's. He thinks of an empty space between Rin and Obito. He thinks of the bed inside Minato and Kushina's home.

He thinks of Obito.

His fingers enclose, he thinks he is grabbing the sun.

Kushina's smiles at him, a blooming ember of a bonfire.

"I'm going," Kakashi said. Lifting his eyepatch to give way to a Sharingan. He thinks he has enough chakra for this, or at least his heart does. "I have a once in a lifetime appointment to meet."

"Don't be late," she called after him.

Kamui wraps around him.

He thinks he can grab the sun in his hands and he thinks he can be selfish, just this once.

It is a hell of a time to be selfish, Kakashi thinks.

But it is a once in a lifetime chance, so he thinks he is allowed.

Boundless space awaits him. White rubble and dark canvas and nothing at all.

But this is the space for him and Obito. The two of them.

It is fitting that Kakashi will grab for the sun here, where there is none.

But, ah, there is.

"Obito," Kakashi called, in what was his steadiest voice.

Obito's head snapped towards him. He looked startled and frazzled and a thousand things Kakashi caused him to be. His hair is the color of coal, and his eye a charming red.

Kakashi thinks he is falling in love all over again.

"Kakashi- you shouldn't be here," Obito yelled. Frazzled and worried and reaching for Kakashi to pull him back to the hospital room. "Your chakra- you're lucky you're not drained!"

He thinks he is. He thinks he is lucky in many ways, and this will just be another.

He thinks that he likes it when Obito is worried for him. His heart beats fast in his chest and he feels impossibly warm.

"I have something to say," Kakashi said. "To you."

A thousand and one things.

"You didn't need to use Kamui to do that," Obito reasoned. "Not- not when you're like this."

It's reckless, they both hear.

Kakashi smiles. "Yeah. That was pretty reckless of me."

"Yeah, super reckless," Obito says and sounds surprised. He is studying Kakashi now, Kakashi thinks that this is fine. That he wants to be studied for all his life and then some by Obito.

There is supposed to be more romance, Kakashi thinks. A prelude, maybe. But Kakashi doesn't have any flowers to give other than the ones inside his body and he doesn't have any dinner reservations other than the ramen cups in his hospital room.

So he thinks that he'll be spontaneous. He hasn't been in his personal life for a long, long time.

But he thinks he can try, just for Obito.

He pulls out a kunai, Obito is appropriately concerned.

He pulls out his Icha Icha, Obito is appropriately confused.

"Kakashi… ?" Obito trails the question off, he is observing.

He hasn't done origami in a long, long time.

But he thinks he can do it, just for Obito.

The origami he makes is a crude, simple thing. Origami doesn't help one become a better killer, so Kakashi never got farther than the basics. But it is enough, Kakashi thinks. He will make more for Obito in the future- if he can.

Kakashi hands Obito flowers made out of paper. And finally, finally, he says:

"I love you."

Obito stares at him. Stare at the flowers. He does not move, Kakashi waits.

He thinks that this is what grabbing the sun is like. His heartbeat is going too fast and his chest is constricting too much and the flowers are blooming and blooming and he thinks that chasing the sun is exhilaratingly addicting.

"Now? You're saying that now?" Obito says at last. His question sounds incredulous and Kakashi agrees.

"If we're quick, we can make it to dinner," Kakashi replies. "Ichiraku's."

Obito stares at him for a moment. His eye is discerning and Kakashi feels like an ant under the microscope.

He thinks that he will burn.

"This is possibly one of the least romantic confessions I've gotten," Obito says. His tone is dry and drab, but Kakashi thinks he's got a snowball's chance in hell.

It is better than none at all.

"I don't think I could be romantic even if my life was counting on it," Kakashi replies.

"I can see that." Obito sighs, it is fondly exasperated and Kakashi thinks he is allowed to hope.

"I can try, though, just for you," Kakashi said, and it is not a joke.

Obito raised an eyebrow. Kakashi takes it as a challenge.

“I love your smile,” Kakashi says. And like a dam that’s been holding on for too long, the rest of his words come flowing as it collapses. “I love your smile, especially when you lie, because it’s so bad and it’s so hilarious and I think I want to kiss you each time. You’re loud, you’re brutish, you’re idiotic, and, on most days, you’re clumsy and I think I love all of that.” Obito’s face has gone that particular shade of Uchiha offended and Kakashi thinks he is in love with that, too.

“You being loud is so weirdly annoying and I think your voice made me a hostage and decided to never release me and now I’ve got a complex. You’re brutish, but that’s fine because I can beat sense into you and you’re always so *loud* about it so I think I love that, too. You’re an idiot but it makes me want to kiss you on good days and it makes me want to call you an idiot and love you anyways on bad days. You’re clumsy and I should hate it but instead I think it’s cute and I think your baby cousins will murder me if I say that because it’s my fault that you have no depth perception, but I think that that’s fine, too, because I can help you move around and we’re one half of a pair and I think that’s romantic but you might think it’s platonic and maybe it’s time to change it to romantic?”

Kakashi feels that he is out of breath, mainly due to all the words that have flown out of him. He thinks he’ll never speak that long again for the rest of his life.

Obito’s face is very conflicted. It is a mix between outraged and *Bakashi, you fucker.* Kakashi still thinks he’s got a snowball chance in hell.

Obito yanks the flowers from Kakashi’s hand with force, he fears it might tear.

“I’ve never been insulted into accepting a confession before,” Obito says, gruff. Kakashi glances up at him and he thinks that he just needs to reach to grab the sun. “But you just might be the first, Bakashi.”

“And maybe last?” Kakashi jokes weakly, finding that he cannot reach for anything at all.

Obito rolls his eye. Kakashi thinks that the snowball is going to survive hell and come out on top. “I don’t think anyone else will *insult* the person they’re confessing to, Bakashi, you’re one of a kind.”

“Just for you,” Kakashi says, a little lovesick.

He thinks he has grabbed the sun, he thinks that this is fine.

But why does his throat still itch?

Obito smiles and Kakashi coughs.

There is something like a pit opening up within Kakashi, he thinks that it's over.

He coughs and coughs and it won't stop.

He grabbed the sun but the sun wasn't his, he thinks. There is a kind of irony here.

Obito does not love him.

Obito seems to realize the same thing. Kakashi does not know how to face him now. They were on the edge of something. But a first date does not make a man fall in love. A date cannot do away with the flowers.

Kakashi can only hope that Obito won't feel guilt- that there will be no Kakashi in his nightmares.

"Bakashi you idiot," Obito hisses and there is something on his lips.

He thinks Obito is kissing him.

He thinks that he is, quite possibly, already dead.

"Through the mask, really?" Kakashi says because he thinks that if he says anything else whatever this is will be broken.

"Just- just shut up," Obito shouts, it echoes inside Kakashi's chest and he wishes he knew what to say. "I love you, too, maybe."

"That's so convincing, thank you," Kakashi comments, not shutting up.

"I think we've got something," Obito says.

It is not very convincing and Kakashi thinks that Obito is saying it so he won't cough. It is undeniably low handed, but Kakashi is in love anyways.

"No- stop, *don't look at me like that.*" Obito scowls, it is a wonderful thing. "Rin was my first love. And she's so nice and great and amazing and all of that."

Kakashi is feeling like a snowball. He is going to melt and *die.*

“You’re not any of that.” Kakashi thinks he is the snowball and Obito is hell. He wants to deck Obito’s stupid face. “You’re petty and vindictive and evasive and really aloof on the best of days.” Kakashi wants to cough, he thinks that it is a miracle that he is in love with this man. “You nag at me all the time and pretend that you’re not and you’re *so* cool and hip and oh, Obito, it’s a you thing, not me. You read your perverted books and bring shame to anyone walking with you and you will trip anyone walking if they even mention it, my knees can attest to this.” Kakashi tore up his Icha Icha for Obito’s flowers, he thinks that he wants to take it back. “You refuse to answer anything with a clear answer and it’s so undeniably shitty that everyone’s betting on what your favorite fucking color is.”

“I feel so loved,” Kakashi says dryly.

“But, and you can’t say this to anyone *ever,*” Obito threatens, as if Kakashi can remember this conversation at all. As though there is a tomorrow for the both of them where Kakashi isn’t coughing his lungs out. “I like the way you nag-”

“You sure don’t look it,” Kakashi mumbles.

Obito gives him a withering glare. Kakashi has decided that if he was going to die, he was not going to die insulted. It is a freeing decision.

“Fucking asshole,” Obito says, maybe Kakashi can delude himself into thinking that it was a bit fond. “Nagging means you care, alright? Or whatever, even if it’s annoying as hell. And frustrating. I’d rather you nag my ears off than just give me that stupid smile whenever I get stabbed.” There is a hint of red on Obito’s ears, Kakashi thinks and cannot *think*. “And your perverted books never fail to give me secondhand embarrassment but that’s fine ‘cause they make you happy, or whatever. They make you relax and destress after missions and- Sage forbid- maybe something of a coping mechanism. Fucking pervert.” The insult is mumbled. It’s said quietly.

Most importantly, it’s, maybe, potentially- could be *fond.*

Kakashi cannot *think*.

“You’re so shitty at giving a hint of any facts about yourself to your comrades but it’s fine, I think I-” Obito takes in a breath, they stare at each other. It’s a weighty thing, the stare. It means that Obito is making up his mind about something. It means that he’s decided that

he's about to shake someone else's world up and then some.

It's Obito maybe, possibly, could be-

"You don't have to do this, you know," Kakashi says conversationally.

There was a chasm between them. Kakashi knows that he's always been on one side and Obito on the other. It is a clear divide, a clear thought process. It makes it easier to go through with whatever decision he was about to make before. The chasm is unpassable.

Or Kakashi had likened it to a race, sometimes. Where at the end there was Obito and Rin. And Kakashi was on the fringes because he never started at all.

Yet here Obito was and he-

The chasm between them is now nothing but a line in the sand. Obito is just on the other side and he's maybe, probably, could be-

Kakashi cannot *think*.

"Holy shit, Kakashi," Obito sighs. It is a tired thing, pained. "You're so-"

"I know."

"Just- just shut up, Bakashi," Obito orders. And he goes on talking without giving Kakashi a chance to reply. "I like it, alright? I like you being an evasive fucker to everyone else. You're a fucking shitty, evasive shinobi. No one knows your favorite color but I like that 'cause that means only I get to know you and nobody else will know you like I do. Your favorite color is that shade of green, the shade of green that's on the wrappers of the mints I give you after you chidori someone. It's so fucking green, I don't know why you like it but now I think I know and it's giving me butterflies. Nobody will ever get to know why you like that terrible green color, because I won't let them and I cannot believe I'm letting a bet just die like this but it's *your* favorite color and *I'm* gonna die before I let anybody else know how you smile when I give you that stupid mint and-"

Obito told him to shut up. But Kakashi can still move. And right now, Kakashi wants to *move*.

Kakashi reaches down his mask, and he thinks he will kiss the sun.

He does.

Obito's lips are warm and soft against his own. The kiss is chaste, they kiss like boys who haven't before and it's a wonder all on its own. They part and Kakashi thinks he is in love.

His throat doesn't itch, his chest no longer hurts but he thinks it's bursting.

He is smiling like a madman for anyone to see. But no one ever will, because this is a place for only the two of them. Obito's eye is swirling red and oh-

He is being kissed.

Kakashi thinks he should close his eyes, it's the kind of thing the heroine in his books would do. But instead they both stare at each other. It is kind of awkward but also very Obito and Kakashi cannot help but smile again. Obito looks at him with his Sharingan and Kakashi thinks he feels his face heating up.

It is an awkward kiss, their lips don't quite mesh together with the familiarity that old lovers would. It is all passion and heat and blindly reaching for each other and wrapping their arms around each other because they've got a chance. It is eyes open and hands reaching, it is awkward but fun. It is the kind of thing Kakashi never imagined.

He imagined smooth motions and age old familiarity. He imagined kisses that were more smouldering, more experienced. The kind that makes fireworks explode and the ground shake. He imagines an Obito that would close his eyes like a fair maiden.

This is none of that. This is the quiet campfire, this is the slowly moving blocks of Kamui. Obito stares at him with red, red eyes, as far from a blushing maiden as can be. But he thinks he loves it anyways, loves it more than his imagination because it's real. It's real and he has it.

"You'd be pretty trashy for a first love," Obito says, breathless. Placing chaste kisses on Kakashi's mole. "And you'd be a terrible second love. And third- actually, loving you is a pretty miserable experience. I think I didn't know because I was in denial."

It is hardly the masterful words Kakashi imagines from Obito. Hardly the eternal love he hears in his dreams and nothing out of the romance novels.

“You’re a terrible first love,” Kakashi states, and he thinks he is floating.

Obito snorts, it is not a pretty sound. “You fell for me anyways.” It is spoken with confidence.

“I grew flowers for you,” Kakashi agrees. “They’re obnoxiously yellow.”

Obito rolls his singular eye. “I seriously thought you were in love with Minato-sensei.”

“No,” Kakashi says, aghast.

“Yellow flowers? Come on, Bakashi, the idea has *merit,*” Obito argues.

“I threw a kunai at his picture when you brought in your creepy conspiracy board.”

“It’s not creepy,” Obito yelps first, which shows exactly where his priorities are. “And I thought you were denying because it was so scandalous!”

“You’re a fucking idiot,” Kakashi says with no real heat.

“You’re in love with this idiot,” Obito replies. “What does that make you?”

Obito is never going to let this go, Kakashi realizes. “I’m a half plant fucker.”

It is Obito’s turn to be outraged.

They argue the rest of the way to Ichiraku’s.

It is hardly ideal for a first date. Kakashi complains about his ripped book, Obito is still outraged about the plant comment. Later, he is outraged that Kakashi’s mask only hid his mole. Kakashi thinks Obito has no right to complain when he places his lips on it so often. Broth is spilled and Kakashi thinks Teuchi is very done with them both and they’re only not kicked out via the grace of Kushina being Teuchi’s best customer.

Obito keeps the origami flowers tucked inside his chuunin vest and defends it from any drop of spilled broth and Kakashi thinks he might be a little more than in love. Kakashi still complains about his lack of Icha Icha and Obito complains that he is a pervert. Kakashi wiggles his

eyebrows and says that he'll be adventurous for the both of them, Obito chokes.

Kakashi has to do a few chest pumps to get Obito to breathe again but he thinks they're doing pretty alright. Teuchi was positively done with them and ushered his daughter away. Kakashi thinks he should be offended but instead all he does is complain that Obito's lips taste like ramen.

Obito is incensed.

"Maybe you should've taken me out to dango instead!" Obito yells. There is fire in his eye and Obito is alive and animated. Kakashi crinkles his eye in a way that he knew would annoy Obito.

"Dango is expensive," Kakashi drawls. "I don't have coupons for them."

"Are you paying for this date with Kushina-neechan's coupons?"

Kakashi, tellingly, deigns not to answer.

Obito is not very happy about Kakashi's nonanswer.

He is sure that the whole village can hear Obito shouting. Obito is shouting and yelling about how this is the worst date he's been on, but he hasn't left yet and he's leaning in for an angry kiss so Kakashi does not see the problem.

At the end of the date they kiss again. Obito still refuses to close his eye like the creeper he is. Kakashi does it for him. Slotting his hand over Obito's eye and leaning up slightly to kiss him. He thinks he does not mind if Obito opens his eye for every kiss they share, but he thinks that they should have a proper, close both eyes, type of kiss once.

Kakashi forgets to close his own eyes, he thinks they both have a problem.

Obito reacts with a vengeance when he makes sure Kakashi can see his eye swirling with the Mangekyou when they kiss again. He is so very petty, and Kakashi is in love.

This was the date of a lifetime.

No one lets Kakashi live this down.

It seems that the whole world knows that he is in love with Uchiha Obito and they are a pair now.

(No thanks to Obito's yelling session during their date.)

He coughs up flowers but it's the last of them, he'll make a full recovery and Minato is halfway ready to snatch up Tsunade to make sure of it. Minato thinks that this is perfectly reasonable, Kakashi thinks their village might get decimated by a Senju in the near future. The nurses congratulate him. Side eyeing his haphazard state and he had to valiantly defend his and Obito's honor. Kushina brought party poppers and no one is happy. Kakashi thinks that this is her personal vengeance. He still has some in his hair and he is pretty sure there is definitely some still lurking around the room.

Obito is hunted down like a particularly shiny bounty, he is brought to Kakashi bound and screaming.

Kakashi thinks that this is Minato's vengeance.

"I told you I'd do it," Minato says as though it were not fucking weird and a waste of the Hokage's time.

Kushina is all blush and adoration, she is biased.

Rin makes sure he gets no eggplants for the rest of his stay. She is petty. She does not rescue Obito either. So it's up to Kakashi to cut Obito loose like he is a present.

"Minato-sensei is scary," Obito says.

"He's overprotective," Kakashi argues. "If you were anyone else you wouldn't even be allowed to scream."

Obito considers this and then nods. "Still fucking weird."

"Don't say that in front of Kushina-neechan."

Obito raises an eyebrow at the endearment, about to interrogate.

"Did you know the nurses are saying that we made wild, passionate love in Kamui," Kakashi says instead.

"Kamui isn't some cheap hotel room, Bakashi!"

"I know," Kakashi says. "It doesn't even have condoms."

Obito is outraged. He says that it will, Kakashi thinks that Obito is playing right into his hands. He makes the appropriately shocked reaction that Obito has any at all, Obito is, once again, outraged.

“I have a sex life,” Obito argues. Kakashi hums and haws and eventually nods, like a besotted lover unable to say anything else.

Obito shouts again, Kakashi thinks the nurses think they are having some killer love making and he says as such.

That made Obito quiet. Real quiet. And Kakashi again says that the nurses are thinking that they are having a scandalous affair.

Obito gets frustrated and kisses Kakashi to shut him up. Obito has played right into Kakashi’s hands.

“You’re an idiot,” Kakashi says.

“You love me,” Obito argues.

“Yeah, unfortunately,” Kakashi agrees and smiles.

Obito kisses Kakashi again to shut him up. It might possibly be the kiss of a lifetime. Up until Obito kisses him again, and then that’ll be the kiss of a lifetime. Kakashi will go on and on and on until there are no more kisses left to give, and even then. Kakashi thinks they’ve got a shot in the Pure Lands for an eternity of kisses.

Life is, Kakashi will admit, going pretty okay.

Chapter End Notes

> haha ive really struggled between deciding this and the ending where kakashi goes through with the surgery and etc... but!! Ive decided to give yall a happy end instead.
>
> the surgery ending will be updated at a later date since ive already written it out and i just need to edit it haha, heres 2 snippets:
>
> He wakes up.
>
> His name is Hatake Kakashi.
>
> He does not know why he is here.
>
> A woman walks in, her face is familiar- he does not recognize her-

but she is not a threat.

She said he’s been through a surgery.

He asked why.

She said flowers.

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feel free to leave a comment!! i love reading through them and they make me super happy haha <3 ty yall for sticking with me!!

an alternate ending

Chapter Summary

this is for my surgery ending wanters <3

Feel free to take whichever end as the real end haha

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

He finds that he has used up his chance of a lifetime.

He finds that he is too late.

He has been late for most of his life, this, too, will not be any different.

A confession cannot make a man love you back. Obito likes him, perhaps, but his love is not requited. Not in the way that the flowers require it to be.

Obito doesn't love him.

This, too, is fine. (It's not, it's really not. Kakashi was so close, he was *there* the sun was at his fingertips and he had used up his chance of a lifetime. But it will have to be fine. There are no other options.)

"Kakashi- what's- what's wrong?" There is something like fear in Obito's voice. It is fair. No books have mentioned the bitter reality before. It does not mention the sad fate of men who took their chances too late and will pay the price for it.

Kakashi wants his life to be a fairy tale. He wants the happiness of a love returned. He wants to kiss Uchiha Obito. He wants many things but he is not getting what he wants.

Kakashi's life is not a fairy tale. It is just one of many tales of an unrequited love. Written inside a notebook and hope that it'll last him for a lifetime.

Kakashi just smiles, it is not a nice smile. It is a smile of missed chances and *it'll be alright.* "It's fine." He sounds weak, but he thinks he is allowed to. Allowed to sound weak for this moment in time.

“Ichiraku’s?”

Obito grabs his hand and they go.

There is an urgency there.

They have an appointment of a lifetime to make. They cannot be late. They know the hourglass has started to tick down. They know that this is the last chance they’ll have at something. Obito knows that this is the last chance he’ll have to give Kakashi closure.

Kakashi knows that this is the last chance he’ll have to pretend to be Obito’s lover.

This will be the date of a lifetime.

The first and the last.

The date is wonderful. Obito makes small talk and Kakashi teases and laughs. He isn’t supposed to be here, his chuunin vest is missing and his hair has the odor of the hospital, Obito pretends to not see anyways. Teuchi makes sure to stay out of their way, he seems to sense something in the atmosphere. A lingering feeling of missed chances and missed lifetimes.

Obito looks at him like he is beautiful, Kakashi knows he is not. Not with the bags under his eyes and his slightly hollow cheeks. The way his uniform hangs off of him because of his drop in weight. He is far from attractive, but Obito looks at him like he is anyways.

He is kind. Kakashi wants to kiss him, but he thinks he isn’t allowed.

He thinks they could’ve been something.

Instead what they have is this, and only this.

Kakashi finds himself falling in love, regardless. With the way Obito talks and talks with no real pause. The way he makes conversations about anything and everything. They way he lets their hands slot together.

Eating like this is awkward, but Obito teases it away with a casual challenge to see who can eat the fastest.

Kakashi ended up winning, if only by just.

The origami flowers he made are somehow tucked in his hair by the end of it all. Obito says that it's pretty for something made by Kakashi. Kakashi just laughs.

At the end of it, Kakashi leans up slightly to kiss Obito's cheek. He pulls his mask down and lets Obito see his face, this is the first and last time Obito will be able to see him as he is, so he thinks he'll let him. Just this once.

Obito's eye is red, red, red. Kakashi thinks he is flattered.

Obito complains that he is only hiding a mole and Kakashi says that it's a very nice mole.

Obito still complains. But it is the fond kind. The kind clumsy first dates say when they've run out of things to say.

They lapse into silence, Obito's hand is warm against his own. He thinks that this is unforgettable.

He thinks that this was the date of a lifetime.

Later, Obito accompanies Kakashi back to the hospital. There is a kind of finality, here.

Obito looks at him and his face is twisting with grief.

Kakashi is unable to offer him anything. He felt selfish and wrong. He has given them closure but in turn, Obito now is saddled with grief.

"I'll- I'll still be here for you, after," Obito offers. It is a silent promise. It is the kind of promise Obito needs to keep himself afloat.

"I think I'd like that," Kakashi says. "I think I'll like spending time with you."

Obito laughs it off dryly.

But Kakashi thinks he knows himself.

Whichever version of himself will like spending time with Obito just fine.

He slips the origami flowers into the last pages of his notebook. It is a crude simple thing.

He hopes it won’t wither.

He wakes up.

His name is Hatake Kakashi.

He does not know why he is here.

A woman walks in, her face is familiar- he does not recognize her- she is not a threat.

She says he’s been through a surgery.

He asks why.

She said flowers.

He is confused. His throat itches at the word and there is something like a pang in his chest but he does not know why.

She says there were flowers in his lungs because he fell in love too deeply and his chakra went mad for it.

He comments that he must’ve been a fool.

She shakes her head, no emotion visible. She then handed him a notebook. She says her name was Takada.

The notebook has his handwriting on it.

He thinks he gets it.

His memories are in here, he guesses.

She nods.

Days pass and then months.

He is not the Hatake Kakashi that they want.

They are not the team he remembers last.

He doesn't even remember his team, but that is fine. He does not care. He should. He thinks he should care.

He does not feel.

It's all his past self's fault. For falling in love and only fixing it too late. And now here Hatake Kakashi is, never quite whole again. But what was wholeness?

Kakashi does not remember, so he does not care.

All he has is the mint green notebook in his hand and some flowers pressed in it. Yellow petals with bloody marks. It is macabre. Like a trophy except the winner never got to celebrate.

Uchiha Obito does not look at him. Maybe it is out of guilt, maybe out of shame. Maybe out of hurt. There are numerous reasons. None of them relate to him anymore. It's all in the past now. The chance of a lifetime has gone by.

They get back into a routine. It won't ever be the same again, but they manage. His team treats him like glass, he lets them know he is the jagged remains of one. Dangerous and sharp, not damaged.

It is easy when he knows everything about them. They are humans in the end and they see what they want to see. When Kakashi teases the Yondaime, he can see the man relax. When Kakashi praises Nohara Rin's cooking, she preens like never before. When Kakashi gives Kushina's sunflowers, she melts.

They are shinobi, but they are Kakashi's team first and foremost. And what they want is their teammate back, so Kakashi will give it to them.

It is easy to know their likes and dislikes. For all that his past self has failed, he has succeeded in at least this aspect.

Frustratingly, Kakashi knows very little about the man who penned the notebook.

Oh, he knows his insecurities and secrets and the things that fuel his nightmares.

Yet he cannot even name the man's favorite color.

It is maddening.

He thinks he wants to know. So at least some parts of the man will remain, he thinks that this is only right.

With each discovery of the man's preferences comes a revelation. Like the pieces of a puzzle slowly slotting together to reveal something utterly heinous.

It begins with the man's favorite food. Eggplant miso, it was.

The first time he ate eggplant miso soup he knew. This was his favorite food.

He had asked for seconds and Uzumaki Kushina folded. She looked on fondly as he ate and ate. She practically confirmed that he used to love it.

This is the taste of his favorite food.

He wonders how it was that he had forgotten it.

Then he asks who usually made this.

She answers that it was Obito.

It is a revelation.

He does not know whether he likes the food because of its flavor or because it was Obito who made it.

This didn't feel like a victory.

He learns that most things aren't.

Uchiha Obito does not notice his inner war and instead offers to make more.

He is kind, Kakashi notes.

Kakashi had probably loved that, too, once.

It is a slow realization. From his favorite resting place to his favorite volume of his favorite book. It all boils down to Uchiha Obito at the end of it all.

He likes to rest near one of the training grounds. It is a tucked away respite. Beneath a tall, looming tree with colorful leaves. It is a pretty thing. Kakashi thinks it unique, perhaps his past self did, too.

Instead, he finds that the tree has the remnants of Uchiha Obito's

chakra. It is a pathetic thing to realize that his body relaxes at the faint trace of chakra. It is pathetic to realize that Uchiha Obito made this tree years ago and Hatake Kakashi never stopped coming to rest. It is pathetic to realize that Uchiha Obito had long forgotten about this tree, it is just one of many he's created over the years. Hatake Kakashi thought it was special, it has a crude *Bakashi* carved on it.

His favorite book series is Icha Icha. His favorite volume of the multiple installments is nothing special, but it's obvious he had favored it. The book has more wear and tear than its relatives and Kakashi finds that maybe his past self favors the more bland kind of book. The kind that he can just read through and relax and not think much at all.

Instead, he finds that the book he has gotten has an ugly: *Enjoy your birthday present, asshole.* written on the first page.

He knows who has penned this. Their penmanship hasn't changed at all. It is amazing if it didn't bring with it terrible revelation. Like the gaping maws of a beast that threatens to swallow Kakashi whole.

The final straw was when he checked over his belongings. Finding that most things he has were strangely colorful. It was a mint kind of green, pastel and soft. It was odd, but it was also strangely relaxing. To look at the odd soft green pens and notebooks and papers scattered about. He thinks he can vaguely taste slight mint on his tongue.

It has nothing to do with Uchiha Obito's own color palette. So he had thought that he had finally found *something*.

Hatake Kakashi is wrong.

Uchiha Obito unwraps a piece of mint, tossing it to Kakashi one day with a bright grin. Kakashi had just put his hand through another person's heart. The sound of lightning is still ringing in his ears and there is smoke in his nose and he thinks he hates this.

Then there is mint in his mouth and Uchiha Obito's teasing grin in his eye- it is a weak grin, but it is something nonetheless. Kakashi's sharingan is still covered since they say he cannot handle the strain just yet. But the shade of green he saw will be one that he can never forget.

The wrapper was colorful, a gentle shade of green.

Kakashi would know that shade of pastel green from anywhere.

His heart goes thump, thump, thump at the taste of mint in his mouth and the soft pastel green in his hands.

His body has been conditioned to love Uchiha Obito. It is a maddening thing to realize. He thinks he would hate it if he could feel it. But all he can feel is a distant sort of pity.

It is the kind that is watching someone climb mountains only to stare at the prize that awaits. It is watching someone fall in love so deeply but never quite taking the plunge to grab the deep sea pearl. It a distant sort of pity seeing someone never try at all. Who only resigns and toss it up to fate and childhood crushes out of fear of rejection and damaging whatever relationship he had. It is the sort of pity you look at a runner when they give up at the starting line.

Kakashi thinks that he pities his past self. Hate is too strong but pity is just right. It is the dulled edges of the emotion, but he thinks he can feel it, if only just.

He talks to Uchiha Obito sometimes, the man always obliges him even if he looks like he's on the verge of scampering off. He thinks Uchiha Obito cares a whole lot for his past self. Cares more than he should a teammate, at least.

Uchiha Obito looks at Kakashi and every glance seems to pain him that it wasn't the person he is looking for.

The thing Kakashi feels is the distant sort of pity, it is the pity that *ah, this could've been* if only the runner bothered to try. If only the diver bothered to reach his hands out. If only.

They make do with the little conversations they have. Uchiha Obito clinging onto the new honesty that Kakashi has taken on in place of not simply caring to be evasive anymore.

It winds on and on until Uchiha Obito asks offhandedly what his favorite color is.

It all comes down to that question, he finds. Kakashi's favorite color.

"I like green," Kakashi says. "The bright sort of pastel green."

Uchiha Obito raises a brow, confused. Kakashi reaches into Uchiha Obito's pocket and pulls out a mint.

He doesn't know why he is smiling or why his eyes sting, but it is anyways.

"Look," he says. "It's this color." He thinks he tastes mint on his tongue and warmth inside his chest. His heart goes thump, thump, thump.

Uchiha Obito stares at him and the mint.

He seems to reach an answer.

Kakashi prepares for another question.

Instead all he gets is:

"Bakashi, you idiot." It is spoken softly, privately. Like it wasn't meant for his ears.

Uchiha Obito's face crumbles. It is a terribly ugly look. He stares at the mint like it is something monstrous and terrible and wonderful all in one. He stares at it like it has all the answers to life and all the tragedies of it.

"You idiot," Uchiha Obito says weakly.

Kakashi thinks he can hear Uchiha Obito's heart. It sounds like it is beating in tandem with his own.

Thump, thump, thump.

Something changes in their interactions after that. Uchiha Obito clings onto Kakashi's presence and rejects it just as fiercely.

Kakashi thinks he knows why. It is the sort of realization that comes slowly and terribly.

It reaches a boiling point.

They are eating at Ichiraku's, just the two of them.

Uchiha Obito asks what the notebook said about him. These are the words of a desperate man.

"It said that you're a member of Team Minato," Kakashi says.

Uchiha Obito doesn't say anything, Kakashi thinks he wants him to

continue. So he does.

“It said that you gave me your Sharingan. It said that you came back to Konoha.”

Neither of those things are what Uchiha Obito wants.

Kakashi knows what he wants, but he thinks it is too personal and cruel to give out.

Uchiha Obito pushes, regardless.

In the end, there is a silent compromise for Obito to get a glance at a ghost’s thoughts. Kakashi won’t say it, he can’t. His throat gets choked up and his eyes burn with heat.

Uchiha Obito’s eye traced the words of a long gone remnant. He takes in a shuddering breath.

This is Obito, you’re not allowed to love him.

It is written teasingly, Kakashi can almost hear his own voice drawling the words out playfully.

He thinks Uchiha Obito can hear it, too.

They sit in silence, there is no other sound other than the quiet rustle of the pages as Obito’s eyes burn red, red, red.

When finally, the rustle stops. The final page awaits.

There are origami flowers tucked into them. Unwithering.

There is something brewing inside Uchiha Obito.

Kakashi can guess. It’s not a pretty conclusion.

Kakashi doesn’t confront the man. He doesn’t do anything but stare. They make conversations. Kakashi’s nose can pick up on the faint smell of flowers.

He thinks he feels pity, if only the barest traces of it.

His chest goes thump, thump, thump.

It is a sad rhythm. It is one that makes his heart clench and his chest

hurt.

If the pity he feels for his past self is watching a man who fell in love with a pearl yet never took the plunge, this is the pity of watching a man falling in love with a ghost he can never reach.

One day, Uchiha Obito looks at him. Really look at him. He is searching for a dead man inside Kakashi's body. It is a futile thing, but Kakashi lets him.

He is holding flowers in his hands, not real ones, no. They are an imitation of one. Origami flowers. They make his chest pang with hurt.

There is the sweet scent of flowers in the air.

He thinks it smells like forget-me-nots.

They stare at each other.

Hatake Kakashi finds that he wants to laugh.

Uchiha Obito looks at him like he is looking at a lover.

It is a chance of a lifetime.

But they've missed each other for this one, he thinks.

"Obito," he states. Sentimentality is a thing of the past. There is no need to pretend to care when they all know that it is a farce. The apathy eats at him, he cannot bring himself to care.

Uchiha Obito smiles, it is a complicated thing. It is a thing of missed chances and a hope like a flower growing on concrete. "I made these for you." Uchiha Obito hands him the flowers. Origami flowers. They are complex and beautiful and there is something about them that makes Kakashi's throat go dry.

He realizes that there are words on the flowers. The words of a terrible novel that no one with a shred of dignity would parade around in public. Yet Hatake Kakashi did anyway.

This is Uchiha Obito reaching for the moon, Kakashi recognizes. Hands held wide up and fingers enclosing. He wants to grab for that distant moon and pull it back to his side.

The moon is empty and wane, there is nothing left for him to grab, Kakashi thinks.

“You did,” he acknowledges. There is really nothing else to say.

Uchiha Obito coughs. There are forget-me-nots between them. He thinks that there is a certain kind of irony there.

“I love you.” This is a confession. This is Uchiha Obito bearing his heart to the moon. “If you hurry and accept, we can make it to Ichiraku’s.”

The words make his throat itch. There is a pang inside his empty chest. He does not know why.

He can be cruel, he thinks. He has the potential for it. He can wreck Uchiha Obito and leave him with nothing but tears and shards of the moon inside his hands. He can be so, so cruel and do what Uchiha Obito has done to him and break his heart. It would be easy. It would be cruel. It would be vindication.

But it is none of that. Because his past self had wanted Uchiha Obito to be happy. There is no vindication to be had because his past self never blamed Uchiha Obito.

And in the end, there is no reason for a vindication. Hatake Kakashi had fallen in love all by his lonesome, and he had fallen out of love just the same.

There is no blame to be had, because it was Hatake Kakashi who decided to fall in love by himself.

Hatake Kakashi is a genius; his past self was a fool. A fool who wanted Uchiha Obito to be happy.

A fool that wrote, *This is Obito, you’re not allowed to love him.* It is a statement of possessiveness. It is warning and possession all in one. It is wanting to love Uchiha Obito even beyond forgetfulness. It is the yearning of an old dog that refuses to let go.

For all that his past self had not cared to grab Uchiha Obito, he sure has a tight grip.

Kakashi isn’t the one that Uchiha Obito wants. He hasn’t been for weeks and months now. Who Uchiha Obito wants is a ghost. Someone that only exists in the pages of a mint green notebook with the shade

of the mint wrappers Uchiha Obito favors.

A ghost that wants Uchiha Obito to be happy.

He doesn't care about most things, anymore. But Kakashi thinks he owes the old dog at least this.

"I can't go to Ichiraku's, I think it's too late," he says. There is a double meaning there, one that they can both hear. "You should forget about me."

Something inside Uchiha Obito breaks. Kakashi does not know why. He thought he was being kind, but he does not know how to be kind anymore. So this is all he has.

Forget-me-nots linger in the air.

There are words that laid unsaid between the ghost and Uchiha Obito.

Kakashi wouldn't know which, his past self hasn't written it down. He had taken it to his grave, taken it with his emotions and feelings and memories.

But he thinks one of those words are, *Yeah, I think I'll go to Ichiraku's with you, crybaby.*

Kakashi's heart is beating, a rapid thump, thump, thump.

It is his past self. A conditioned reaction from a time long past.

His heart thump, thump, thump anyways, because that is what it does.

He thinks that this is want, this is what love feels like but in physical form. He does not feel. But his heart goes thump, thump, thump. His throat goes dry and so are his lips. His fingers itches for something and his eyes have gone dilated.

This is love in physical form. Something that cannot be written out of this body.

This is love from a ghost from beyond the grave.

His heart goes thump, thump, thump.

Forget-me-nots exist between them. There are coreopsis pressed inside his notebook.

He thinks that they had a chance of a lifetime.

Chapter End Notes

haha this ending was super fun to write as well ngl. Again, feel free to take whichever ending as the true one, either is valid depending one what yall like haha

feel free to leave a comment below to shout your feelings as me or just anything haha, i love to read them and they make my day!! <3

End Notes

i'll write more about kakashi and his team since I love writing about team minato being a trainwreck but also a family kind of team, so there's more to that in the next chapters!

hopefully this won't stretch on for more than 10 chapters haha. i give it an estimate of 5 but things may change so please keep that in mind!

Feel free to leave a comment on your thoughts, whatever you like or just something random, it really makes me happy! <3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!